

RECNAC TRANSFAERSO

A/N: This fic takes place pre-OotP and was mostly written before the book came out, though it was posted after. This is the ORIGINAL version of this chapter. A revised version is currently being written. See my Author's bio for details.

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It was August 28. It was officially the worst day of Harry's life. He had always been very accepting of situations, most likely because of living with the Dursleys, but this was just unfair. Life could be so cruel sometimes...

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For Harry, the summer after his fourth year began as a living hell. Apparently, the Dursleys hadn't been as forgiving with the Tongue Toffee incident as they had with previous ones. Now, along with the usual punishment of being weighed down with chores, they had started abusing him as well. Now, Harry was used to Dudley and his gang roughing him up a bit, and the occasional slaps and hair-grabbings from his aunt and uncle, but now it was different. He had never been truly afraid of his uncle before, but now, as Harry's "punishments" got worse, he noticed a strange gleam in his uncle's eyes that gave a plain message to Harry: even though his uncle was beating him with more passion than he had ever before, he clearly was restraining himself from doing what he really wanted to do: kill him.

However, Harry had a streak of pride, or maybe it was embarrassment, that would not allow him to ask for help. So, he continued to write to his friends like nothing was going on, saying "Yes Dudley is still a big fat cow" and the occasional "Can't wait for Hogwarts" but nothing that could give his friends the slightest clue about his situation.

As life for Harry was gradually declining, a family moved in a few houses down, the Stensons. One day, while Harry was trimming the hedges, the girl came and talked to him. It was a brief conversation

as Harry insisted he needed to finish his chores. (He also was afraid of what the Dursleys would do to him if he were found talking with the new neighbor. What if Harry's abnormality affected what they thought of the Dursleys?) She was a year older than Harry, with curly brown hair and freckles and was a little pudgy (though if she had two clones, they could still all hide behind Dudley standing side by side). A few days later, after a few other brief visits by the girl, her mother came over saying that Dakota, her daughter, had seen Harry working in the yard and wondered if he could do some work for them. He could even stay for dinner. Well, the idea of getting rid of Harry for a whole day, along with making a good impression with the new neighbors appealed to his uncle and so Harry somberly followed the lady back to her house.

'Great,' he had thought, 'Now I get to do all of the neighbors chores too.'

But when he got to the house, there were no chores to be done. Mrs. Stenson

proclaimed that, from what she saw, he was "doing far too much work around that house for a growing boy's own good. By the looks of you, you've already pulled your weight, now it's your cousin's turn, and he could pull the whole house!" She giggled at her pun and left into the kitchen. Dakota walked in carrying a few movies asking him which one he would like to watch. At this point, Harry was utterly confused, as any normal person would be. This girl that he had met just the day before for about two minutes had him being treated as if he was part of the family. Instead of answering her question he just blurted out one of his own.

"Wait, I'm not here to do yard work?"

She looked at him with a look that was cheerful but still a bit nervous. "Umm...no, I thought you'd like this better than doing chores all the time. From what I've seen, that's all you do all day. I thought that this would be a nice little surprise, unless you don't want to be here. I won't be offended if you go home."

“Oh no, this is great! I was just a little confused at first. Are you sure though?” he quickly recovered. He was relieved. At first he had thought it might have been some cruel joke.

“Of course. So do you like action or comedy?” She smiled holding up the videos.

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That night he met Dakota's dad over dinner. Harry enjoyed himself immensely. They had asked him questions with genuine interest without being nosy like many of his other neighbors (Aunt Petunia being their ringleader).

At first Mrs. Stenson would come over every few days to request Harry's assistance with some chores until Harry just began to go over there every day after his chores for at least an hour. It was great for him as the Dursleys had basically stopped feeding him and he now could get food without having to sneak it. It was like he was just part of the Stenson household and was always greeted with cheerfulness. It was nice to have a few hours a day without looks of hate and disdain. Aside from his times at the Burrow, these times were his favorites ever spent during summer.

One day, Harry arrived home to extreme tension. Uncle Vernon had lost his big account. Harry quietly snuck up to his room, hoping that the drinking binge that his uncle was on would make him pass out. He lay in bed hardly daring to breathe, listening for any indication of his uncle's actions. He could occasionally catch a few words being slurred out to Aunt Petunia, mostly about how it was very suspicious that his biggest client found another company with lower prices. Harry's heart began to pound. All of a sudden he heard a drunken yell, “It's that boy that's doing this! Him with his abnormality!” Harry knew what was coming when he heard the thundering footsteps. He quickly glanced at the windows but was just reminded that escape was hopeless being that Uncle Vernon had put more heavy-duty bars up at the beginning of the summer. Instead he closed his eyes. He knew that pretending he was asleep was hopeless, but he frankly couldn't think of anything better to do at the time.

He heard his door slam open and felt his arm being nearly ripped out of its socket as he was torn from his bed. Next thing he knew he was being slammed up against a wall and his uncle's hands snaking around his neck. His head swam from lack of oxygen causing his uncle's already slurred words to blur into a slow buzzing. Suddenly he was thrown to the floor and the hands gone from his neck.

"Well answer me boy!" his uncle drunkenly growled. Unfortunately Harry was too busy gasping for air to answer, not that he had heard the question in the first place. He felt a sharp pain in his stomach and then his chest as his uncle kicked him. Harry rolled up into a ball to protect his stomach as he thought that one more kick would bring up the meal he had just had. This just infuriated his uncle who stepped over him and then kicked him in the back, which made Harry whip back out of his ball. His glasses had been thrown away from him in the fall. What remaining vision he had began to swim and grow white. His last coherent thought as his torso was undergoing a final downpour of kicks was, "Hey, I always thought it gets black when you pass out." Then, as the world got blindingly white, he was drowned in the comforting darkness of unconsciousness.

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The next day, Harry went through his chores mechanically, the pain in his stomach and arm and the soreness of his throat only occasionally dragging him from the thoughts that he was lost in. He couldn't decide whether to go to the Stensons' house or not. If he went there was the risk of them discovering his awful secret, but the lack of his presence might cause some questions over at their house that could end in them coming to find out what was wrong. The thought of the Stensons confronting the Dursleys about him caused the latter argument to win, so after his chores, he pulled on Dudley's old turtleneck, which sufficiently covered his bruises and walked over.

He had told them that he couldn't stay long because he had a bit of a cold (thus explaining the warm clothes during summer) but Kota had gotten a new horror movie that she refused to watch alone. At the first scary point in the movie, Kota jumped and grabbed the shoulder that had almost had an arm disconnected from it and despite his efforts, Harry gasped in pain. He had hoped it would be covered up with him

saying that she had scared him, but Kota was suspicious and promptly poked his shoulder again. Harry couldn't help but wince.

"What happened to your shoulder?" she asked, forgetting about the movie and also grabbing the attention of her father who had been reading the paper.

"Uh nothing. I have to go." He quickly started to get up but Kota wouldn't let her curiosity go uncured.

"Let me take a look at it, Harry, I used to be in a first aid class." Harry began to protest but Kota grabbed the collar of his shirt and yanked it down sideways, hoping to reveal the infliction to Harry's shoulder, but let go of it with a gasp when she saw the livid bruises on Harry's neck. Harry knew he was in trouble. The bruises distinctly shaped like handprints couldn't be covered up as easily as previous injuries had, so he decided that leaving would be the easiest solution. He turned saying he had to go but found that Mr. Stenson was blocking his way, his mouth hanging slightly open and his eyes puzzled.

"Wait a second there, Harry, let me take a look at that," he said reaching for Harry's collar again. Harry took a step back muttering that it was nothing and that he had to go, his eyes searching frantically for an escape.

Mr. Stenson repeated Kota's action but pulled the neck straight down. Harry silently cursed Dudley's huge shirt as the collar stretched down enough to reveal the fresh bruises on his neck for the second time of the night. Harry was at a loss for words mumbling that it was nothing while trying to figure out some explanation.

"Kota, stay here. Harry, come with me." It was the sternest and most serious voice that he had ever used in front of Harry. Harry tried once again to state that he needed to go, but it came out as a sort of desperate plea that Mr. Stenson seemed deaf to. Mr. Stenson placed his hand on Harry's back and led him into the kitchen. Harry had to clench his jaw to prevent crying out in pain.

In the privacy of the kitchen, Mr. Stenson ordered Harry to take off his shirt. His mind raced through all of his options, but since all of them

required the use of magic in front of Muggles, he reluctantly and slowly took off his shirt. He couldn't look at Mr. Stenson while he demanded that Harry tell him who had done this. His mind was a state of pure panic. What would Uncle Vernon do when he found out that Harry let the secret out? 'Well let's just say he's not going to hold back this time,' nagged an annoying little voice in the back of his head. How would Hermione and Ron react when they found out he was dead? Hopefully, they'd mourn for a significant amount of time. And then maybe they would stop denying their feelings for each other and admit their love while comforting each other. It was so obvious that they liked each other. 'Wow my mind's sure rambling,' he had thought before he realized that Mr. Stenson had been calling his name.

He looked up at Mr. Stenson not bothering to try masking the terror in his eyes.

"It was only this one time!" he blurted out as if that would make it all better. But the yellow bruises beneath the blue ones told otherwise and apparently Mr. Stenson didn't miss that. His eyes were full of fury.

"Harry, you're staying here tonight. You can stay in the guest bedroom." He began to march out of the kitchen. Harry grabbed his shirt and quickly pulled it back on while starting after Mr. Stenson.

"Wait! Don't talk to them! It really isn't bad and I'm leaving for school in September anyways. Please!" They were now in the living room and by the look on Mrs. Stenson's face, Kota had told her what happened to the extent of her knowledge. The two females looked scared and bewildered, but Harry didn't really care. There was a more pressing matter.

"Kathryn, Harry will be staying the night. Give him some painkillers. I need to have a talk with the Dursleys." Ignoring Harry's pleas, he marched straight out the door, slamming it behind him.

The half hour or so while Mr. Stenson was gone was spent seated at the kitchen table with the two females trying to soothe Harry who was trembling and constantly glancing at the door. When Mr. Stenson returned nursing his right fist, he simply stated that he was going to

get help the next day and that it was time to go to bed. The two adults lead the two teenagers up the stairs, then splitting off with Mrs. Stenson making sure Dakota went to her room lecturing her about not visiting Harry's room that night, and Mr. Stenson guiding a still-shaking Harry into the guest room. He was carrying a bag that Harry hadn't noticed before, which he explained held as many clothes of Harry's that he could grab. Harry meant to say thank you but could only manage a feeble nod of the head.

Mr. Stenson closed the door to prevent Kota from hearing him. "Listen Harry, what the Dursleys did to you is very wrong. No one deserves that but especially not you. Everything will turn out all right, okay? Now try to get some sleep. You'll be staying with us for a while." He gave Harry a comforting smile and then left the room, shutting the door gently behind him.

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Mr. Stenson called Child Protective Services the next day, but as they were certain that there was no immediate danger and were very busy with more urgent cases, along with the fact that Uncle Vernon had a few friends in high places over there, it took a long time to get a social worker to come out to investigate, too long. Harry's bruises had all disappeared except for the faintest sign of them, and apparently that wasn't enough evidence. The social worker talked with the Dursleys who assured him that they would never do such a thing to their darling nephew and didn't understand what these people were talking about, but their nephew was a bit of a delinquent and having no parents had sparked a desperate need for attention. They knew Harry was a chronic liar, but they didn't realize he would do something this low for attention. They apparently also confided their belief that the Stensons were brainwashing Harry and playing into his delusions since they had always wanted a son and this was their perfect chance. Therefore, it was decided by the court (with a judge that knew Vernon Dursley personally) that it was in fact dangerous to leave Harry with the Stensons and that he would be immediately placed back with his aunt and uncle, only being allowed to see the Stensons with his relatives' permission, which ended up being only when they were going out and Mrs. Figg wasn't able to watch Harry.

Harry had surprisingly been able to keep all of this from anyone in the wizarding world, not mentioning his home life at all in his letters, aside from a few brief mentions of some new neighbors. (He had explained to the Stensons that Hedwig was trained like a carrier pigeon.)

Even though he had to go back to the Dursleys, he was back to his life of the occasional slap or hair-pulling, since the social worker had threatened to visit before the end of summer. His uncle was constantly saying, "Just wait until the next time I see you boy. Why don't you come back at Christmas holiday?" with a menacing gleam in his eye and an evil smirk on his lips.

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On August 28, Harry went over to the Stensons to get out of the Dursleys' way while they had some of Uncle Vernon's business clients over to dinner. (Harry's record with dinner company apparently wasn't to their liking.) Kota was the only one home, and Harry went over how to use Hedwig to write letters back to him and what Hedwig liked for treats. Kota told him that he should come home from his boarding school for Christmas. He could stay with them and the Dursleys would never even know. The two were in high spirits when Kota's parents arrived home, but their moods took a giant dive when they saw the somber looks on the adults' faces.

They told Harry and Kota to sit down; there was something very important that they needed to be told. Harry asked if he should leave, but they said no, he should hear this too. They had just gotten back from the doctor's where their fear had been confirmed. Mr. Stenson had a form of cancer. Harry's mouth dropped open and his eyes grew wide. They went on explaining how they found out and that they were going to try the best they can to fight it. Harry knew little about cancer, but from what he'd seen on those hospital dramas with Kota, they were usually given an amount of time they had left to live. Harry desperately felt the need to know this but bit his tongue. It wasn't his place to ask. Kota hesitantly voiced his question.

"Well, it's just an estimation, many patients live ten times as long as they first guess without even being cured...but they have said that I've already had it for a while and well...they estimate about six months,"

Mr. Stenson said hesitantly as though he wasn't sure if he was doing the right thing in revealing this information. Kota let out a sob and Harry gasped. That was so soon. And he was going to be at Hogwarts until at least December!

'It's probably best that way,' Harry thought, 'they need to spend time together without me hanging around...wait. Hogwarts. Magic. Maybe...' His thoughts were interrupted by a comforting arm over his shoulder. He looked up to see Kota crying into her dad's neck and Mrs. Stenson sitting next to him on the couch gently telling him that the Dursleys had said that he needed to be home in about five minutes, and that she was sorry to end his summer this way, but it would all be okay. Harry looked at her in disbelief. He had never heard anything that could be further from okay. She quietly said to have a good time at his school, not to worry too much, and that they would love to have him during his Christmas break, and the Dursleys wouldn't even have to know.

Harry walked back to the Dursleys in a daze, faintly taking in that there were no extra cars in the driveway and it was therefore okay to go inside. His daze stayed with him all the way to his room, not even noticing Dudley's comment about him looking deranged.

Sitting on his bed, he suddenly remembered his idea earlier. Maybe there was a wizard cure! He could research it and ask his professors. He had never heard of a wizard getting cancer so they must have a cure! This hope gave Harry a determination that stayed with him the next few days.

On September 1, Dakota stopped by offering to drive Harry to the train station. Despite Uncle Vernon's hate of the Stensons, the offer was too tempting to deny and soon Harry's trunk was in the back and Harry was silently sitting in the passenger's seat with Hedwig in his lap, while Dakota drove on in equal silence.

"I just can't believe it, Harry." Her voice sounded weary and raspy, probably from crying so much.

"It just isn't fair," Harry sighed, stroking Hedwig through her cage. They remained silent for the rest of the car trip, lost in their own

thoughts. Nothing they could say seemed important enough to voice; everything seemed trivial now.

Kota parked and walked with Harry inside, carrying Hedwig's cage while Harry dragged his trunk. They stopped near platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ and said their goodbyes. She had wanted to see him onto his train but he said that he needed a few minutes alone to recoup before getting on. Kota gave Harry a hug, which he returned without embarrassment and whispered in her ear, "I'm going to find a way to fix this."

She laughed and broke the hug, wiping away a tear. "That's what I like about you Harry, forever thinking you can change the world and that it's up to you to do so. The only thing I want you to do is come home at Christmas okay?" He gave a nod of assent, and with a sad smile, she turned and walked off.

Harry turned and looked at the familiar barrier. He reminded himself that he would be able to help and took a deep breath before walking towards the barrier, his trunk and Hedwig in tow.

A/N: Once again, this has been reverted back to the ORIGINAL version of the chapter. The revised chapters are going to be put all together, details on my author's page.

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"Harry!"

Harry began to turn towards the familiar voice when a pair of arms was thrown around his neck.

"Hey 'Mione," he said with a bit of a chuckle as Hermione stepped back.

"Wow, Harry, I haven't seen you all summer! I'm sorry I didn't write more, but we were traveling you know, and guess what! I have a surprise that I've been waiting to tell you, but I'll tell you on the train when Ron gets here and...."

She was cut off by Ron, who had just come through the barrier and was walking towards them.

"Oi! Harry, Hermione!" he called to grab their attention. Hermione turned around and gave Ron a quick hug, turning Ron's cheeks a nice shade of red. Hermione didn't seem to notice this and started to guide the two boys towards the train so they could get settled enough to hear Hermione's surprise.

"How many sugar quills did she have this morning?" Ron muttered to Harry, earning himself a nice "Oh shut it Ron!" from Hermione who had overheard. Harry laughed as he was dragged along. It was good to be back.

When the three had finally found an empty compartment and settled down, Hermione pulled out a badge from her pocket and held it up for the boys to see.

"Look I was made prefect! Can you believe it?" she squealed with joy.

“Hermione, I would’ve died of shock if you hadn’t been made a prefect,” Ron said. “Anyways, you weren’t the only one who was made a prefect.” Ron took out an identical badge and held it up, but far less conspicuously than Hermione. In fact, Ron looked a little stressed out about the whole thing. “Fred and George have been teasing me mercilessly ever since I’ve got it, calling me Percy Jr. and such. What a nightmare!”

Harry and Hermione laughed at this, though Ron couldn’t seem to find the humor in it.

“That’s great Ron, I’ll have a friend to be a prefect with!” she said. Harry could see that Ron was relieved, probably having thought Hermione might have been upset that her news was made less glorious.

“Well, it looks like they gave us a matching set,” Harry said, pulling out his own badge. He had been utterly shocked when he had found it in his Hogwarts letter. He couldn’t figure out why he would be made a prefect when he spent half of every school year breaking the rules. It seemed Ron shared his thoughts.

“Well it’s understandable with Hermione, but I think with you and I, they’re trying that ‘give them responsibility and they’ll be more responsible’ method. Mum tried that with Fred and George once. That poor cat...”

“So Harry, how was your summer? You didn’t really mention it in your letters.” Hermione asked with interest. Harry knew it was just a friendly question, but he still felt his stomach tighten and his pulse quicken with the thought of them finding out the secret that had already once that summer been found out.

“Oh, er, it was fine,” he muttered fingering his badge. “Better than usual, for staying in Little Winging.”

“Yeah, who was that girl you mentioned in your letters? Dakota? Does Harry have a little crush?” Ron asked, nudging Harry playfully with his elbow and shrugging his eyebrows.

“Dakota? No, definitely not a crush. Just a friend,” Harry said with the utmost sincerity. It just wasn’t like that with them. “How was Rome, Mione?”

With that change of subject, the subject of Harry’s summer was forgotten, and the rest of the train ride was relaxing and enjoyable.

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The weather was much like the last year when they arrived, pouring rain and with the added bonus of wind strong enough to push a few of the younger students over. There was a mad dash from the train to the carriages, but even despite their quick speed, by the time Harry, Ron and Hermione scrambled into a carriage, they looked like they had decided to go swimming in their clothes. Hermione started to pull shut the carriage door, which the wind was holding open, to stop the rain from coming in, but stopped when she heard, “Hermione, wait! Please!” Neville came racing up and stopped right in front of their carriage door, or tried to stop. He skidded on a puddle and ended up sliding past their door, and finally landing on his butt in a puddle. He quickly got up, slightly blushing, and tried to push his way against the wind towards the carriage. Ron and Harry each grabbed an arm and helped pull Neville into the carriage, as Hermione used all of her strength to pull the door closed.

“Thanks guys,” Neville said as he got up off the floor and started to wring out his robes. “I didn’t know if I’d be able to get a carriage, or even get to a carriage in this weather.” He plopped down on the seat next to Harry.

“Hey no problem! Let’s just hope we don’t get blown back to King’s Cross Station,” Ron laughed. “I mean it’s like a hurricane out there!”

“Well I’m just glad to be here. Gram almost didn’t let me come.”

“What? Why wouldn’t she want you to come to school?” Harry asked in disbelief.

"Well, she was scared about You-Know-Who being back. She says Professor Dumbledore is a brilliant wizard and if he says You-Know-Who's back then it must be true," Neville explained.

"But Hogwarts is one of the safest places in the world!" Hermione protested.

"Well it's supposed to be, but she's having her doubts. I mean with the Chamber of Secrets incident in second year and with what happened last year..." Neville said, cautiously eyeing Harry with that last part. "But I convinced her to let me come. I told her that Dumbledore's prepared now and if You-Know-Who's back then I couldn't be in safer hands."

Harry was shocked at this information. He could understand Neville's grandmother being worried, especially with what had happened to Neville's parents, but had Voldemort really caused as much panic as to have her consider pulling him out of school? From the gaping expression on her face, Hermione looked horrified as well, but probably more at the mere idea of missing school. Ron, however, looked less than surprised.

"Well actually, Neville's grandmother isn't the only one who thinks that," he hesitantly began to explain. "Some people seem to think that Hogwarts might be a target. I mean there are a few key people that we know he's after who are at Hogwarts." He slipped a glance at Harry at this. "Others had such a violent reaction to Dumbledore's speech at the end of last year that they're calling him crazy and don't want their kids in a school run by him. Mom never considered pulling us out, she has too much faith in Dumbledore for that, but a lot of her friends were considering it. Some are even trying to kick Dumbledore out of his position as headmaster, but that's not going to happen. Too many people support Dumbledore and wouldn't feel safe with their kids under anyone else's care."

Harry couldn't help but feel a little guilty about this whole thing. Not only did he play a role in bringing Voldemort back to power, but he was also putting Hogwarts and the people in it at risk just by being there. He pushed the thought back in his mind. It was either Hogwarts

or the Dursleys, and he would rather battle Voldemort a hundred times than going back to the Dursleys year round.

Finally, they reached Hogwarts. They all braced themselves as Hermione opened the door, which the wind caused to rip out of her hands, opening as wide as it possible could without being ripped off its hinges. They one by one jumped out of the carriage, Ron and Harry quickly pulling Neville back up after he slipped on another puddle, and began to push their way against the wind toward the castle. At one point a small second year was pushed backwards by the wind and would have kept going if Harry had not responded to his pleas for help as he slid by. He held onto Harry's arm for the rest of the way, making Harry's trip doubly difficult.

Finally they had pushed through the doors and into the entrance hall. It was as if someone had turned off a giant fan and every step Harry took seemed easier than it had ever been before, like he was as light as a feather. The small boy that had been using Harry as a guide thanked him, a little embarrassed, especially upon realizing who's arm he had latched onto, and then hurried away with a group of his friends.

Harry did the best he could to wring out his robes (until Hermione cast a quick-drying spell on him) and made his way into the Great Hall.

Apparently, Ron was right about Neville's Grandmother not being the only one with her views, as there was a significant lack of students, even after everybody had made their way out of the storm. All of the fifth-year Gryffindors were still there, though it seemed like there might have been a few missing from the other years. Ginny sadly told them that one of her friend's parents had apparently decided to keep her home. They had been debating it for a while, up until the last second, but her absence told Ginny that they hadn't listened to Mrs. Weasley's arguments.

The Hufflepuffs seemed to be missing the most, probably because Cedric's death had hit so close to home for them. The Slytherins, on the other hand, didn't seem to be missing anyone at all. Ron voiced his opinion that most of their parents were Death Eaters and would

be safe from Voldemort, or at least know when and if they needed to leave.

The mood definitely wasn't the same cheer as was usually felt at the beginning of the term. Most people were whispering about the absence of people. The Hufflepuffs seemed especially distraught as many people had friends missing.

Dumbledore rose to make his speech and the Hall quieted.

"Another year of learning has begun. I see the weather attempted to quench your thirst for knowledge, and though rather unsuccessful at making you more wise, it certainly blew you away," he said with a smile. Many students chuckled at the pun, glancing up at the enchanted ceiling to see the rain still pouring down. "As many of you have noticed, there are a few students absent from our number this year. I hope you all will recognize that they had their reasons. I will not lie and say the wizarding world does not have rough times ahead of it. Whether Hogwarts itself will be affected or not is unknown, but it is without a doubt that each of your lives will be affected; many already have. I assure you that this school is a very safe place with a staff that would die defending it and you as students. (At this Ron nudged Harry and asked if Dumbledore had forgotten that Snape worked there.) As I watched you all make your way to the castle from my office window, you know what I saw? ("And he didn't think to help us?" Ron whispered.) I saw courage. Most of you didn't think twice about facing the storm outside or getting into the boats to cross the lake, and those who had their doubts at first overcame them. (Many students glanced at Malfoy at this, who had been making a large scene, refusing to get out of the carriage until someone brought him an umbrella or got the carriage closer to the door, but eventually gave in as no one seemed to be paying attention to his demands besides Crabbe and Goyle.) I saw determination. You faced your challenge with all the strength you could, never giving up. Most importantly, though, I saw you help each other. Working together and helping those who need it is what is going to help you face your future, whether it be life in general or for a more immediate cause. I firmly believe that no kind gesture goes un-rewarded, though it might not seem that way at times. (Harry noticed Dumbledore briefly looking at him and thought he might have been partly referring to Harry saving

Wormtail's life.) I assure you all that despite our smaller number this year, it will be a year to remember.

"On a lighter note, I am happy to announce that our new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher is not all that new, but has returned at the request of myself, many parents, staff, and students. Though he was not able to make it to our welcoming feast, I assure you that he will be here for your first day of school. That professor is Remus Lupin, and I'm sure you all will welcome him when you see him."

Harry's mouth dropped open at this, along with Ron's and Hermione's. Most people cheered and clapped at this, Harry joining in once he got over the initial shock.

"I didn't know he was coming back, Snuffles never mentioned it in his letters." Harry laughed, calling over the din.

"They probably wanted to keep it a surprise! This is great!" Hermione said clapping and smiling.

"Hey, look at the Slytherins," Ron sniggered. "They're taking it well, wouldn't you say?" Harry looked over to see a look of horror on many of their faces. Malfoy was yelling "No!" and pounding his fist on the table like a little child having a tantrum. He couldn't be heard over all the clapping. Harry laughed.

After the cheering died down, and the sorting was over, the feast began. Harry ate as much as he could, but neither he nor Ron could really fit much in their stomachs. On the train, they had had a contest to see who could eat the most chocolate frogs. When they ran out of those, they had turned to Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans. Ron had won when Harry had to stop or risk losing everything he had just put into his stomach. Even though it felt good to have a full stomach for the first time in awhile (the Dursleys still didn't feed him very much and he had only really eaten a satisfying amount on the days he spent with the Stensons), the combination of the two sweets was enough to make anyone loose their appetite. The announcement of Professor Lupin's return, along with the sorting and the wonderful feast, had been enough to raise the spirits in the Great Hall up. Harry felt like he was at home again.

Disclaimer: The characters of Harry Potter, the plot, and my attention span all belong to J.K. Rowling. I just write down my crazy daydreams about her books.

Author's Note: Oh look, the plot's speeding up! Yay! Thanks for all the reviews. Keep 'em coming! A special thanks to Firemask, my faithful reviewer!! And if anyone can tell me how to do italics and center things, help! Also, some of my indents didn't work, but c'est la vie! Sorry all! Oh and can anyone tell me if this is going to be free to write for here if I didn't sign up for any of those paying services? Just so I'm prepared when the bill comes. Thanks! On with the tale.

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The first few weeks passed by very quickly for Harry. His emotions flipped back and forth. He was so thankful to be back at his school among his friends, joking, complaining about homework, knowing that he wouldn't have to go hungry for quite a while. Despite the extra load of homework the fifth years had been given in preparation for the upcoming O.W.L.s, Harry was even enjoying the simple time he spent with his friends doing their homework, making up predictions with Ron for Divination, and trying not to roll his eyes as Hermione tried to explain to him the concept behind every charm or spell they were learning.

He was happier than he had been in months, when he had been plagued by thoughts of the third task, with nothing to distract him from it, and of course, being mistreated by his so-called "family". However, he was constantly thinking of the Stensons and his mission to help them. Ron teased him by commenting that he was turning into Hermione with all the visits to the library he had been making. It was true though. At every free moment, Harry would slip off to the library looking for anything that would help, from magical medical books to books about Muggles. There were a few references to Muggle ailments, but nothing to help his cause. He even asked Mrs. Pince if she knew of any books on the subject, but she only guessed and pointed out books that he had searched through several times already.

The new knowledge he had gained while reading through all the possibilities had helped him only by gaining a few points for Gryffindor whenever a teacher asked a medical question in class. As he was walking away from Herbology, in which he had just named all the illnesses that could be cured from the petals of a Hintlybloom earning Gryffindor ten points, Hermione came up beside him.

"Harry, good job! You see? I told you this extra studying would be helpful! You've learned so much already! Just think of how well you'll do on your O.W.L.s if you keep it up!" she said enthusiastically, thinking that Harry's newfound knowledge was the result of her "encouragement" (or "constant badgering" as Ron called it) to study things beyond what they were required to learn for classes.

"Please don't tell me you're going to turn into Hermione, mate," Ron said clapping a hand on Harry's back and earning a glare from Hermione. "Who am I going to hang out with if you both are always in the library?"

"Well, Ron, you could always come with us, you know. O.W.L.s are coming up." Hermione began. Harry caught Ron's gaze and they both rolled their eyes.

"Sorry, Mione, I'm allergic to libraries," Ron stated casually. "Just found out this summer."

"Er yeah, and the reason I know so much about medical stuff now is because I was the one trying to find out what was wrong with Ron." Harry laughed. "Now I probably know more than Madam Pomfrey." Harry all of a sudden stopped in his tracks, unnoticed by Hermione and Ron, who was joking about how Harry, the medical genius, had found the source behind his deadly allergy.

'That's just it,' he thought to himself. 'Madam Pomfrey must know something. She had to study all kinds of medicine to be a doctor, magical and Muggle so she'll always be prepared. It said so in one of those books, I just know it.'

He jogged up to Ron and Hermione who were now both laughing and adding on to the now miraculous adventure of Ron's allergy to libraries and the search for the cure.

"Hey you guys, I need to go do something for a bit. If I don't make it to dinner bring me up something from the Great Hall, okay? I'll see you guys later." He immediately started to jog off to avoid questions, faintly hearing Ron yell something about Harry being his hero for curing him from the illness he never really had.

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Harry cautiously walked into the infirmary. There weren't any students in there luckily for Harry. He didn't really want any of his inquiries to Madam Pomfrey to be overheard by students and twisted into some rumor about how Professor Trelawney's predictions about Harry's death were going to finally come true.

"?" Harry cautiously called not wanting to irritate Madam Pomfrey. He would need her in a good mood to make sure she would answer his questions to her full ability. "Madam Pomfrey?"

"Ah. Mr. Potter. Why does it seem that your presence graces this hospital wing more than most other students? Do you go looking for trouble?" Madam Pomfrey had come into the room from her office, obviously under the impression that Harry was once again hurt. Harry blushed a little, knowing that her comment was true; he was in here quite a bit.

"Actually, ma'am, I'm not hurt or anything, I was just wondering if you could answer a medical question I have...for Muggle Studies." He added that last part quickly as to avoid any questions or sweetened up answers that might have occurred if she thought that Harry knew someone in the situation he was about to bring up. But he needed the truth, and if that involved a few white lies, then that was fine with him. "I've already looked through books in the library, but they don't seem to have the information I need. I was wondering if you knew anything about terminal illnesses, like cancer. Is there a cure, because I've never heard of any wizard inflicted with it?"

"Well dear, I do know a bit about that area. Let me see," she spoke over her shoulder as she began to magically clean the bed sheets and do other little chores around the Hospital Wing. "The reason that you never hear of wizards having cancer is because they don't ever get it. Cancer is a Muggle disease that isn't contracted by wizards. There is no magical cure for cancer because wizards never had the need for it, being as we never get it."

"There's no spell or anything for it then?" Harry said half panicked, half sinking into depression. His stomach was flipping all around. Now what could he do?

"Well, dear, let me finish. There was a spell long ago that a wizard invented to save his Muggle mother. It was only used a few times before it was generally decided not to be used again."

"But why would they outlaw a spell that was doing good?" Harry asked.

"I never said outlaw, they never made a law against it just in case they ever found a situation where it would be necessary, but it just dropped out of use. You see it didn't actually cure the cancer, but instead, transferred it from one body to another. The one to do the spell had to take on the cancer themselves. The spell could only be performed on the cancer once, so it couldn't just be transferred around so nobody dies from it. The wizard or witch who performed the spell would have to take it on themselves."

"Were the wizards able to fight it better than the Muggles? I mean, wouldn't their magic help?" Harry asked.

"No, dear. Every one of the few people who tried the spell died from the disease, but it did have strange effects on them. Apparently, the cancer mixed with magic did very strange things to the wizard and their magic, I'm not quite sure what exactly, but I've heard that no two were alike." Madam Pomfrey had been getting readily more excited about the conversation, apparently pleasantly surprised that a student would take such interest in medicine. She suddenly gasped. "Oh my, you know what? I think I may actually have a copy of that spell somewhere!" She quickly went into her office and came out with an

old book. She flipped through a few pages and landed on one with the title "Reclac Transfalso." She flicked her wand and murmured "Copius" and a piece of paper appeared in her hand with the page copied onto it. "Ah yes, here it is. I hope this will be helpful with your report dear." She handed him the paper looking thoroughly pleased with herself.

Harry took the paper, in a bit of a state of shock. ". Thanks ma'am, this should get me full marks." He smiled the best he could and walked out towards the dorm, forgetting all about dinner.

Harry sat on his bed staring at the spell, occasionally giving it another read through, but otherwise lost in his own thoughts. He had the whole room to himself as everyone else was down in the Great Hall enjoying dinner. Food was the last thing on his mind at the moment.

He stared at the spell again. It was the most complicated thing he had ever seen. It required not only an incantation, but a potion as well, which again seemed quite complex. He found it ironic that he had earlier come across a spell to make cancer get dramatically worse within minutes that was a hundred times easier than this one. He remembered it because he found it shocking that such a simple spell could do so much damage in two words. "Reclac Sunimoon." Now, the spell that actually helped things contained words that he couldn't dream of being able to pronounce and the small bit of information next to it spoke briefly of the consequences of saying it incorrectly.

Apparently, in one case, the mispronouncing of one line led to the caster of the spell to become speechless for the rest of his life and the instant death of the person who was having the cancer taken from them. The spell would be a definite challenge. But Harry had met challenges before and knew that if he really wanted to, he could perform this spell. The question was, was he really willing to do the spell? Heroism was one thing, but this would be sacrificing his life. He had only been at Hogwarts for four whole years now. He was happy here and wanted to live. It had been his first chance at a real life. He had friends here. He had people who cared about him now. Was he willing to give that all up?

At that moment, he was interrupted by a quiet hooting. He looked up to find Hedwig perched on the bed-frame. She seemed to sense that Harry was under some stress and seemed very cautious about disturbing him. He realized that she had a letter for him and stroked Hedwig as he removed it from her leg. He settled back against the headboard and opened the letter with a sigh.

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Hey Harry. How's school? It's boring over here. Too bad you go to boarding school instead of Stonewall; it would be a lot more fun with you here. I'm surprised the Dursleys would pay for you to be privately schooled, but I guess they just wanted you away from them, no offense. You know I think those Dursleys are lunatics.

Anyways, Dad's not doing so well. He's started to get treatments for the cancer-chemotherapy and such, but I don't know how long he'll do it for. It's quite expensive and it also makes him feel miserable. I feel so helpless. I have this constant feeling of needing to do something to help but then I realize that there is nothing I can do. I keep telling my parents that I'm handling it all fine; they really don't need the extra worry of how I'm doing. It's a lie though, Harry. I'm scared. Really scared. It's been the three of us for so long, I just can't imagine it being down to two. My mom doesn't work. What are we going to do about money when my dad's gone? We'll probably have to move away. Want to come with us? Sorry I know I'm rambling but I just need to vent. It's just not fair, Harry. My dad is the best person I know. He doesn't deserve it and I just don't understand why it has to be him. He's never done anything wrong!! He tries to keep everyone optimistic but I'm not easily fooled. I know the treatments aren't working. All I can hope for now is a miracle that I can't find the faith to believe in right now.

I'm so sorry about this letter Harry. I just needed someone to talk to about all of this, just get it off of my chest you know. Thanks for letting me rant. Please write back soon. I hope you're having a wonderful time at school. I'd love to see pictures of your friends and such, and didn't you mention that you play a sport. I don't think you ever told me

what it was. Well get me some pictures of that too. I'll talk to you later!! Bye!

Always,

Kota

P.S. Christmas vacation is coming up. You are cordially invited to my house to stay with us, we'd all love to see you and the Dursleys will never have to know. (Maybe we can T.P. their house!!)

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Harry was frankly a little shocked at what he read. Dakota had talked about her father and how she felt about the situation before, just not this in depth. The timing was just too coincidental.

'Well this settles it,' Harry thought to himself. 'It's a sign. It has to be. I'm going to do this.'

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The next few days, Harry was reminded of getting ready for the Polyjuice Potion in his second year, finding all the ingredients he could before deciding he needed to "borrow" some from Professor Snape. However, this time it was without the help of his friends. He decided to get the ingredients for the necessary potion right after Quidditch practice.

When the team finished up, he told Ron (Gryffindor's new keeper) that he had to go visit the Owlery quickly and ran off before he could offer to come along. Harry grabbed his invisibility cloak. When no one was looking he draped it over himself and began to make his way into the castle and towards the dungeon. He dropped his Quidditch things behind a statue near the Gryffindor tower, noting to himself to pick it up on his way back, and continued on his way.

He had tried this a few nights already, both proving to be failed attempts, as the office was locked and Harry didn't know the password. As he got closer to the dungeons he pulled out the Marauder's Map and found the dot labeled Severus Snape to be heading towards the dungeons also, in fact, heading right towards Harry!

Harry whipped his head around to see Snape quickly walking towards him. Harry flattened himself against the wall just in time for Snape to breeze past him. Tiptoeing, Harry followed closely behind him. This was going to be interesting.

They finally reached Snape's office. Snape suspiciously looked around before muttering several different passwords to get into his office. Harry had originally planned to just memorize the passwords and come back later, but as he couldn't make them out all that clearly he just closely followed Snape right into his office, the door automatically shutting behind them.

Snape walked over to his desk and abruptly sat down. Harry noted that he didn't look in the best mood. He pulled a stack of papers out of his desk drawer and began to study them before writing letters on them with red ink. Harry recognized them as their last night's homework,

Harry quietly tiptoed over to the shelves of potion's ingredients and looked for the bottles with the things he needed. When he found each one, he would quickly glance over at Snape, who was hunched over papers muttering about ignorant students, and slip the bottle under his cloak, pour enough of it into the empty vials he had brought in his bag, and then replace them on the shelf, hoping to make it less obvious that there was any missing. He was thankful that he had his scarf and gloves on, and ended up putting them in his bag to prevent the vials from clanking together.

When he was done, Harry realized that he couldn't exactly just leave, as a door just opening on it's own might rouse some suspicion. Instead, Harry cautiously walked up to Snape's desk to see what kind of grades the class was getting, not that it was a great mystery. Harry peeked at the grade-book next to Snape and rolled his eyes as he saw the Gryffindor students having mostly C's, D's, and F's next to their names. Snape came to Hermione's paper, briefly looked it over and drew a big red C on the top, with the comment: "Too wordy." Harry almost sighed. He knew she had worked really hard on that paper, especially since her last paper bore the words: "Too brief." His paper was next in the stack. Snape barely glanced at it before writing a fat F on the top, as Harry always got.

"Damn Potter brat," Snape muttered as he marked the letter in his grade book, almost causing Harry to laugh. Snape finally came to the end of the stack of papers and went on to draw up his lesson plans for the next class Harry had with him. Harry smiled as he saw him scribble down "Pop Quiz: Properties of a Cheveux Potion." He'd have to keep that in mind. Snape's pop quizzes were notoriously random, on things he'd mentioned briefly months earlier, or not at all. Harry always got F's on them, along with most of the other Gryffindors. Not surprisingly, the Slytherins always got great scores on them, undoubtedly because Snape warned them in advance.

'Hah. Well won't Snape be surprised when the Gryffindors ace this next one.' Harry thought.

Luckily, after Snape drew up his lesson plans for his various classes, he decided to call it a night, and Harry was able to follow him closely

out again and then slip away up to the Gryffindor common room, grabbing his Quidditch stuff on the way.

Fortunately, nobody was in the common room when he returned, as it was now quite late. With a groan, he realized he had spent nearly two hours in Snape's office. He crept up to the fifth year dormitory and quietly slipped in, changed into his pajamas and put his new supplies in his trunk.

As he lay in bed he decided that he would have to brew the potion at the Stensons or risk suspicion at school. Not only that, but the spell required the Muggle to know what was going on, as they had to drink the potion and focus on expelling the cancer. This was where things began to get complicated. He decided that he'd have to talk to Dumbledore to find out how he could tell them about his powers. He did live part time at their house, and they were practically part of his family now. True they weren't related to him, but there had to be a loophole in the law. Actually, he wasn't familiar with the law at all, so maybe he was allowed to tell them and he was getting all worried about nothing.

'Well, the only solution is to ask Dumbledore, so there's no use in worrying about it now.' Harry silently resolved before turning onto his side and falling asleep.

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The next morning at breakfast, Ron and Hermione couldn't help but notice that their best friend seemed somewhat nervous. As Harry lifted his fork towards his mouth only to stop and put it back down again and swirl food around on his plates, Hermione shot Ron another worried look. They had started to notice something was strange with Harry that morning when he had put his fork in his mouth to eat, but had forgotten to put food on it, and didn't even notice.

"?" Hermione cautiously called. No response.

"Harry?" she tried again, but he continued to stare seemingly through the table and be deaf to all around him.

"Harry!" Ron leaned over the table to snap his fingers in front of his friend's eyes.

Harry jumped and looked at Ron and Hermione with a slightly stunned expression that melted into an embarrassed smile.

", I guess I must've been dazed out there. Did you want something?"

"Yeah! We wanted to know what's bothering you so much that you didn't even realize you poured pumpkin juice on your waffle instead of the syrup," Ron said exasperated, but in a low enough voice as to not attract the attention of those sitting around.

"And also why you've been glancing up at the staff table about every fifteen seconds," Hermione added in a hushed tone.

"Oh I almost forgot to tell you guys, there's a pop-quiz on the Cheveux potion tomorrow." He passed the information on to those around him telling them to let all the Gryffindors know. He hoped Hermione and Ron wouldn't realize that he was trying to change the subject.

"Harry, don't think we don't realize that you're trying to change the subject." Ron hissed. Harry sighed.

"I just have to ask Dumbledore something that's all." Harry said, hoping that they would accept the vagueness of his comment.

"Harry, stop being so vague," Hermione scolded. "We know something's going on so you might as well just tell us!"

"Hmm. I guess Ron and Hermione know me too well," Harry thought to himself.

"Hey Hermione, didn't you say something about your aunt sending you a book on witchcraft for your birthday?" Harry asked just to change the subject, a quick thing he remembered Hermione mentioning the day before, but as soon as he said it, the full impact hit him.

"Yeah, of course, it's a Muggle book on witchcraft and has no real spells in it or anything. It was a nice thought though. But Harry, you can't just change the subject and expect."

"But your aunt's a Muggle." Harry stated matter-of-factly.

"Er, yeah, and so is yours Harry, or has that slipped your mind?" Hermione looked somewhat confused about the direction the conversation had turned.

"Well my aunt and uncle needed to know about my being a wizard because I was living with them, but why was your aunt allowed to know about it. Isn't that against the law or something?"

"No, well I hadn't really thought of it, I mean my aunt is family. I suppose if it were against the law, they would have told us. I mean we obviously haven't told anyone outside the family, and even then we only told the relatives closest to us. My mum just couldn't stand not to tell anyone; of course my aunt thought my mum had gone mad at the time. It was very interesting convincing her."

Hermione went on to talk about the struggle to convince her aunt that the Granger family did not belong in the insane asylum, but Harry lost concentration. Harry had just found his argument; he just hoped it would work.

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When Dumbledore stood up from his seat and began to exit with a few other professors, Harry also decided that he was done with breakfast. He said his quick good-byes to Hermione and Ron and they wished him good luck on whatever he had to ask.

Harry followed a small distance behind Dumbledore so he wouldn't interrupt the conversation he was having with Professor McGonagall, but as soon as she left to prepare for her class on Monday, Harry seized the opportunity, speeding up his pace to quickly close the gap between him and his headmaster.

"I assume there's something you wish to speak to me about Harry," Dumbledore said smiling at Harry. Harry saw that Dumbledore knew he had been following him.

"Er, actually I had something I needed to ask you, sir," Harry cautiously began. He didn't want to have this conversation in the middle of the hallway.

"Let's step into my office then and you can tell me what's troubling you," said Dumbledore who seemed to have sensed Harry's anxiety about the conversation.

Harry followed Dumbledore to the stone gargoyle, all the while going over in his head what he was going to say. They stopped briefly for Dumbledore to give the password, "Canary Creams," leaving Harry to wonder how he knew about Fred and George's invention from last year.

Harry entered the office very nervously. He watched the headmaster settle into his chair and motion for Harry to also take a seat, which he did quickly. It was all down to this if it was to work at all.

"So Harry, what question would motivate you to follow me throughout the castle?" Dumbledore asked smiling, looking over his half-moon spectacles at Harry.

"Well sir," Harry began with a deep breath. "I was wondering if, well I know that, actually I don't know, but what I mean is, er." Harry paused and mentally reprimanded himself for sounding so stupid. "All right, well you see, there's a family that I've been staying with. A lot. I mean, they're practically my family now, more than the Dursleys have ever been. And I know that there are students at this school who have relatives out of the home knowing that they're a witch or wizard and I was wondering if I could tell these people too." Harry didn't feel like that was convincing enough and launched into another spiel figuring that the more arguments he got in, the better his chances were. "You see, I've been staying over at their house and everything and it's getting to be pretty difficult to hide all of this, and I'd really like them to know so I don't have to lie to them and could talk to them about it. If it's a question of blood connections, my uncle Vernon isn't blood

related to me but he knows because I live with them, so couldn't I tell these people too since I'm living with them part time too?"

Harry knew that was a bit of a stretch, being that he hadn't stayed at the Stenson's house much since the trial, and had not spent a single night there since then, but he knew he might be going back for Christmas to stay with them and that counted, didn't it? Harry realized that Dumbledore had been silent for a while. He lifted his eyes from his knees to look into the unreadable ones of his headmaster.

"Well, Harry, I must say it is rather fuzzy where these types of laws are concerned. It seems they don't want to pass a law that they may later have to break, and would be already breaking. High people such as the Muggle minister, and rulers of most countries know about the magical world. On the other hand, it is important that knowledge of magic stays as much within the magical community as possible. But, yes, you probably just want to know a straight answer to your question. Unfortunately, I can only leave you with a slightly crooked one," Dumbledore warmly smiled at his own joke.

"What is generally decided among the magical community" he continued, "is that Muggles may be told of our presence under a few conditions. First of all, there must be a valid reason, as you seem to have. The other part lays more on your judgment. If you tell this family, you must be sure that they will tell no one else. The secret must stay with them and they cannot tell even their closest friends. If that does occur, you could be in serious trouble with the ministry. Therefore, I can only say that it's up to you, but be very sure of the character of those you tell."

Harry was filled with joy. Everything was going to work out after all. He had no doubts of the character of any of the Stensons. The bright smile that erupted on Harry's face made Dumbledore's eyes twinkle.

"Thank you sir! I know they won't tell! Thank you!" Harry stood up with a smile of relief and turned towards the door.

"Harry," Dumbledore called after him. "Is there a specific reason you feel they must know this?"

Harry halted. If he hadn't been facing the door, Dumbledore would have noticed a torn expression on his face. He didn't like lying to his headmaster, but he just couldn't tell anyone. He turned around with a big smile on his face.

"No, sir. I just would like them to know." With a nod of Dumbledore's head, Harry turned and walked out the door, now both anxious for and dreading winter holiday. This finalized it for Harry. There was no turning back now.

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. Ron and Hermione had both been rather surprised to find that Harry was going home for the break and decided that they would as well. It had never really hit Harry that his two best friends had given up staying with their families for many of the winter holidays because of him and felt slightly guilty.

Still, he felt nothing more satisfying than walking by the list for people staying at Hogwarts and not seeing his name. Of course, no student was staying this year. Harry figured that this was both due to the same reason that many students had been kept from Hogwarts in the first place, and that those who did believe Dumbledore knew that bad times were ahead and wanted to be with their families.

Of course, Ron joked that now that they were leaving, nobody had a reason to stay.

"Oh come on Harry, you know they're all thinking, 'Well if those two Gryffindor stud-muffins aren't staying than what's the point?'" Ron said with a laugh.

"Should we send out notices apologizing that we have to take the fun out of Hogwarts for Christmas?" Harry asked in mock-seriousness.

"Nah. Might make them cry even harder."

The two boys laughed as Hermione rolled her eyes joining in the laughter as well.

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Harry had obviously never left Hogwarts for Christmas since he was enrolled. He had never before felt the joy of packing only some of his belongings, knowing that he'd be back soon. For once he didn't dread leaving the school.

The train ride home was filled with students chatting excitedly about their holiday plans. At one point a group of rowdy Hufflepuffs started

singing carols, most unfamiliar wizard ones, but Harry recognized a few Muggle songs as well.

Another aspect of this train ride that was different was that many students were practicing magic to show their parents since magic was not forbidden during winter vacation as it was during the summer. Harry guessed this was to give the students some opportunity to show off to their families what they had learned.

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When they got to the station, Harry saw the Stensons, who he had told to look for him at Platform 8. (He thought that seeing him appear from a wall might be a bit of a shock for the moment.) He quickly ran over to them, saying something about a mix up in platform numbers. The Weasleys and Hermione came up to be introduced, and for once, Harry didn't have to be embarrassed by the people picking him up from the station.

Ron gave Harry a discreet nod to communicate that he had, in fact, informed his family about the Stenson's ignorance of magic.

Once the three members of the Stenson family, along with the six present members of the Weasley family and Hermione, were introduced, the conversation quickly became awkward.

Mr. Stenson immediately asked everyone how school was (which got a resounding "fine, thanks" in reply) but then began probing into what their favorite subjects were and what they did in their free time there. Hermione mentioned history, and Harry mentioned math, but quickly tried to close the subject before any questions could be asked about what math they were in or what they were learning about in history, as he wasn't quite sure what would be the response that would correctly correspond to their ages.

Mrs. Stenson, sensing tension, tactfully asked Mr. Weasley what he did for a living. Unfortunately, Mr. Weasley couldn't exactly say that he worked with the Ministry of Magic in the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts department, as the Stensons might have tried to have him committed.

Chaos emerged as Mr. Weasley looked to Harry and Hermione for support, since they were the only two wizards familiar with Muggle occupations. Fortunately, both were on their toes about the subject and quickly stated the Muggle job Mr. Weasley supposedly had. Unfortunately, Hermione firmly stated "dentist" while Harry simultaneously declared "lawyer."

It got worse when they both tried to fix it.

Hermione said that he was a dentist for lawyers, while Harry said that he was a lawyer for dentists. The Stensons looked extremely confused not only by Harry's and Hermione's disagreeing, but also at the dumfounded expression on Mr. Weasley's face who had no idea what dentists or lawyers were in the first place. Everybody jumped in to try to save the mistake, but as many of these were the Weasleys who had no familiarity with Muggle occupations, things became very confusing very fast.

Things were getting to the point of insanity when all of a sudden Dakota gasped and grabbed her father's hand.

"Oh my God! Harry's uncle is here!" she squealed looking very panicked. Harry followed her gaze and sure enough, his uncle was walking around angrily staring at Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ and around it, no doubt in search of his nephew. He must have suspected that he would try to stay with the Stensons, and despite his loathing for Harry, this went against the rules for his feud with Mr. Stenson.

Everyone turned back around quickly, each looking a bit edgy. Hermione and the Weasleys didn't quite understand the circumstances, but could definitely get the feeling that this was a bad situation.

Dakota appeared to be having a panic attack, while Harry sort of stared in a shocked silence, like a deer caught in headlights. Inside, however, the deafening sound of his heart pounding out of his chest was only outrivaled by the screams of his mind telling his disobedient legs to run. If his uncle saw him he would spend two weeks in misery and would most likely be banned from seeing the Stensons ever again, which was legally already supposed to be in affect. Also, the

Stensons could be in trouble with the law for having him. Things were not looking good.

Luckily, Mr. Stenson kept his cool and shook Harry out of his near comatose state. He shoved the keys into Dakota's hand and told her to get them out of there. Harry, regaining his senses, shoved Hedwig's cage into Ron's hands and told him to send Hedwig to him when he got home.

He looked up to see his uncle's head swivel in their direction. He ducked. Through the cracks between the bodies of his friends, he could see Uncle Vernon's face well up in fury in seeing the Weasleys with the Stensons together. He began to stalk over, his face growing more purple with each step he took.

Harry felt Kota grab his hand and pull him into a small group of people who had been walking by, intent on making their trains. The two made sure their faces were turned away from Vernon and tried to hide themselves amongst the taller adults, Harry pushing his trunk in front of him.

When they were safely away from the turmoil that was sure to start, Harry grabbed Kota's arm and whispered that he wanted to see what was happening. She bit her lip and looked like she was going to protest, but then admitted that she did too.

The two hurried behind a pillar and peeked out, just close enough to see and hear what was happening.

"Don't tell me that you didn't come here to pick that boy up, Stenson. Why else would you be talking to them?" he said nodding towards the Weasleys with a scowl.

"Uh oh, good question there," whispered Kota.

Mr. Weasley looked at the Stensons with a look of wonder on his face. "Wait, you know Harry, Harry Potter?" The rest played along with gasps of "Oh my goodness!" and "Talk about a small world!" along with another round of introductions.

"Ooh, good save," Harry whispered. He felt like a Quidditch commentator.

"Absolutely brilliant!" Kota replied excitedly.

"I don't buy that for one second. I know he's here somewhere. You're hiding him, aren't you," he pointed a shaking finger at Mr. Stenson. "You know you're breaking the law if you have him into your home!"

Realizing what a complete idiot he was at this comment, Uncle Vernon immediately shut up. The Weasleys and Hermione looked somewhat taken aback and confused at that comment, while the Stensons sported looks of tamed fury.

Harry was swept with a wave of humiliation. He desperately hoped the conversation wouldn't turn down THAT road. He felt Kota give him a tense glance, making his face burn even more.

"Dursley," Mr. Stenson started angrily but strangely calm. "My family's business does not concern you, so I suggest you get out of my face before you are reintroduced to my fist."

"Ah threats of violence, I see. Your business concerns me if it has to do with my nephew!"

"Oh I see, so all of a sudden you're a caring guardian?"

This was going in a bad direction fast. Harry looked desperately at Dakota who nodded and immediately raced up to her father, interrupting him before he could say more.

"Well, Dad, Uncle Dan's train was delayed. The man said that they got stuck in a snowstorm somewhere and will be staying the night. He said we should go home and come back tomorrow," she turned to Uncle Vernon as if noticing him for the first time. "Hello Mr. Dursley. Are you picking up Dudley from school?"

"No, we picked him up yesterday," he responded curtly.

"Well, er, thank you for the directions Mr. Stenson, and Ron will be sure to mention that we met you to Harry when he returns to school," he looked reluctant to leave (as well as the rest of the Weasley clan) but ushered them all away anyway. Hermione caught sight of her parents who she hadn't noticed before because of the scene and went over to them, discretely peeking over her shoulder to make sure nothing interesting was happening.

Uncle Vernon seemed to recognize his defeat.

"If I catch that boy in your house, there'll be hell to pay," he threatened and began walking away.

"Well, you will never step foot in our house, so don't worry," Mrs. Stenson called after him.

The Stensons pretended to be engrossed in a list of the next day's train schedules until Uncle Vernon was safely out of sight. Then, Kota led them to where Harry was hiding and they all walked to the car together, none of them seeing a murderous looking Uncle Vernon watching them from the station window.

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A/N: Uh oh! Psycho uncle! What will this mean for Harry? Tune in next update to find out! Imagine me with a big cardboard sign right now. It says "Will write for reviews." Thanks!!

* * * * *

Harry's winter holiday was going great. He truly felt part of a family. He helped pick out, put up, and decorate the Christmas tree, something he had never been allowed to do before. There was always hot chocolate, hot apple cider, or eggnog being passed around. Despite Harry's objections, there were even a few presents under the tree with his name on it.

Hedwig was in and out of the house, each time coming back with a gift with warnings not to open until Christmas written all over them. He happily put these gifts under the tree as well.

Finally, Christmas morning arrived, starting with Kota racing in, yelling for him to get up. Harry was up in a flash.

When everyone was downstairs, Harry took aside the presents from him and told the Stensons that they would have to be last because they required a bit of an explanation. He then looked at the Christmas tree with the Stensons searching for presents with their names on it, laughing with joy as they began to open them, and realized that he had no idea what to do. He had opened presents when they were on the end of his bed, but he couldn't help but wonder if there was a special way to go about opening presents under a Christmas tree. Was he supposed to just grab his presents and start opening? Was there a special order that he was supposed to open them?

"Harry, open this one, it's from me," Kota said handing him a present.

'Well, that solves things,' Harry thought as he took a seat on the floor beside Dakota and began to unwrap his present. It was a picture frame that contained a Muggle picture from a day when they had both been on a mad sugar rush as a result from attempting to cook brownies. They had made a huge mess and in the photo, both were covered in flour, cocoa powder, and the dark batter in general. Kota had jumped onto Harry's back and they were both sticking out their tongues at the camera. Harry laughed out loud and said thank you.

"Thanks Kota. It's great! I don't have very many pictures or picture frames. This is fantastic!"

"Well I'm glad you like it. Everyone ought to have pictures. Now you can show all your friends at that school of yours what a cute neighbor you have. You could show it to George Weasley. See if you can set us up!" she laughed. Kota had announced that she thought the Weasley twins were cute on the way home from King's Cross and chosen George since he was single. (Fred was dating Angelina.)

"Now Dakota, you know you're too young to date. You're not allowed to date until you're married," said Mr. Stenson, as he had many times before. Kota rolled her eyes in response and handed Harry the present from her parents, a very small box.

Harry unwrapped the gift. He had been wondering what it was ever since he had seen it under the tree. He opened the box to see a key. He turned his questioning gaze to Mrs. Stenson.

"Harry, that is a key to our house. You can use it any time you want as you're always welcome here."

"Th-thank you," Harry said somewhat stunned. "Are you sure?"

"Of course we're sure, Harry. Just don't let your Oompa Loompa uncle get his hands on it." Everyone laughed as Mrs. Stenson playfully hit her husband with a ball of wrapping paper. Harry thought there could be no greater gift.

The Stensons soon finished opening their presents. Harry had refrained from opening his until he could explain properly.

"So Harry, when are we going to get to open the mystery gifts?" Kota asked eyeing the gifts in the corner eagerly.

"All right, well as I said before, my gifts need somewhat of an explanation. I need to tell you something very important." Harry saw Mr. and Mrs. Stenson give each other a confused look. "Well, you see, a few years ago."

He paused and figured that wasn't the right way to say it. "Well, the school I go to."

That wasn't it either. He sighed, giving up on cushioning the blow. "What would you say if I told you that I was a wizard?"

The Stensons all laughed.

"Well I'd check to make sure nobody slipped any alcohol into the eggnog," Mrs. Stenson laughed.

"I'd tell you to use your powers to clean up all of this wrapping paper," said Mr. Stenson, "this place is a disaster."

"I'd tell you turn that ugly sweater I got from Aunt Carline into something less scary." Kota said holding up the horrific neon orange and green polka-dotted sweater that she had opened earlier.

Harry took out his wand and used a banishing charm to send the pile of discarded wrapping paper into the garbage can and then transfigured Kota's sweater into a scarf and changed the color to blue.

"I can't really help you with the eggnog, Mrs. Stenson, but I can assure you that I am telling you all the absolute truth."

At this point all the Stensons were gazing at Harry, eyes wide and mouths open in shock. All was silent for a very uncomfortable minute until Harry sighed and gave them all their gifts.

"Go ahead, open them," Harry instructed. As if in a trance they all slowly unwrapped their gifts from Harry.

Harry hadn't been quite sure what to get them, especially the two adults, as he had never had to Christmas shop for a family. Hermione and Ron helped him pick out some things in Hogsmeade. He knew he wanted to give them slightly magical gifts, but had to find ones that were easy and safe for Muggles to use, so Hermione was most helpful in this area. He ended up getting the adults a blanket that will always keep you at the temperature you want to be, whether it warmed you up or cooled you off, and got a bunch of different

magical candy and small pranks for Kota. The Stensons still seemed to be in a stupor when Harry explained what the gifts were. After a long pause, Harry sighed.

"Are you guys going to say anything?" he asked hopefully. Kota looked from him to the scarf to the trash in the trashcan to the strange candy in her hand and back to Harry.

"Oh. My. God." she breathed. Harry laughed bringing a smile to Kota's face.

"So the school you go to...." Mrs. Stenson started but seemed to not be able to finish. Harry finished for her.

"Is Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry."

"So the Weasleys...." started Mr. Stenson.

"Wizards and witches. That's why we had trouble with his occupation. In reality he's the head of the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Office in the Ministry of Magic."

"Muggle?" Mr. Stenson asked.

"Non-magic people."

"Like us," Kota stated. Harry nodded.

"Wait, the Dursleys can't be..."

"No they're Muggles. That's why they hate me so much. My mum, Aunt Petunia's sister, was a witch born into a Muggle family. My aunt hated her so much, was so jealous of her, I guess that just got passed on to me when I had to go live with them. They don't want me to ruin their picturesquely normal family by being different." At this Mrs. Stenson got up from her seat on the floor and sat next to Harry on the couch, putting her arm around his shoulders.

"Listen, Harry, the Dursleys have no excuse to hate you, no matter if you're a.... no matter what. What they did to you was wrong and

there's no excusing it. You're a great person. It's not something wrong with you, but something definitely wrong with that family you unfortunately got stuck with. Do you understand that?"

While she had spoken, Harry had found a sudden interested in knees to avoid the gazes of all three of the Stensons. He nodded still looking down. Mrs. Stenson put a finger under his chin and gently lifted it so Harry was looking into her face.

"You deserve so much more than that, dear."

Harry didn't know what to say. He didn't really want to talk about it so he just gave a weak smile and nodded his head again.

"One thing though. You can't tell this to anyone. If you do, I could be punished very severely."

They all promised with all their hearts that they wouldn't breathe a word of it to anyone.

"Too bad you didn't tell only me," Kota said. "I wouldn't have minded having you put a spell on my parents to let me date." Everyone laughed as Mr. Stenson glared at her.

They spent the rest of the day opening Harry's presents and having Harry explain everything about the wizarding world to them. Everyone tried pieces of candy and had fun levitating or talking like mice or daringly trying Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans, with a garbage can nearby filled with ones that had been too disgusting to swallow. Harry showed them many charms and spells to their great delight. Harry wondered if Hermione and Ron were doing something similar with their families. It was a very great day.

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That night, Harry caught Mr. Stenson alone in his study.

"Er...Mr. Stenson? I was wondering if you had a moment," Harry began peering into the cluttered room.

"Of course Harry, come in and have a seat," he said looking up from some paper work taking off his reading glasses to show that Harry had his complete attention. Harry closed the door behind him and sat down in the chair across from Mr. Stenson.

"All right. I'm going to tell you something, but I don't want you to get your hopes up because along with the pros there are some possible cons." Harry paused and Mr. Stenson nodded for him to continue. "Well I found a very rare and old spell that might take away your cancer, but there are some risks. First of all, it hasn't been performed in many years so I'd have no one to instruct me in it, meaning that I could only do the best in teaching myself. Second of all, if anything goes wrong, it could result in your death, so if you have a good chance of recovering you might not want to try it. It's an extremely complex spell that would require your total trust in it."

As Harry had talked Mr. Stenson's face began to shine with a hope that Harry hadn't seen in months. It seemed that he had been expecting death from this and now he might have another chance at life. He closed his eyes and kept moving his hands from covering his mouth to massaging his temples, looking as much in shock as he did at Harry's announcement of his magic earlier that day. Finally he looked with a look of such joy that his eyes seemed to be wet with threatening tears.

"Harry, you don't know what this means to me. There is no way I could ever thank you enough. This means another chance with my family. How far along can I be before you perform the spell?" He asked. Harry noticed that he was shaking a little bit, especially his hand as it went to run through his hair. Harry smiled at seeing the usually composed man so vulnerably happy.

"It can be performed at basically anytime, as long as you're...er...alive," Harry mentally cursed himself at how bad that last part sounded but didn't know how else to put it. "If you want to wait until it's closer to...er...February, just in case, that's fine with me. You may have to pretend you're the Dursleys to get me out of school, but I'm sure it can be arranged."

"Wow, Harry. Yes. I'll do it despite the risks. In fact there seems to be no real risk. The treatments weren't working. I don't know if Dakota told you, but I stopped chemotherapy treatments a few weeks ago. Damn things almost brought me to an early grave. I had no hope until now. I.... thank you."

"It's the least I can do since you and your family have helped me so much. You basically saved me, so I can only hope that I can save you in return."

"I can't wait to tell Dakota and Kathryn. I'll wait until morning so that you can get some sleep tonight."

Mr. Stenson walked Harry up to his room in silence. There just seemed to be nothing else to say. But the silence wasn't awkward at all, but instead peacefully right somehow. As Harry said goodnight, changed into his pajamas, and slipped under the covers, he even forgot what doing this spell would mean for him, and fell into a blissful sleep.

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The next morning, Harry woke and dressed. On his way downstairs for breakfast, was met by two crying females rushing up the stairs towards him. Harry briefly considered running the opposite way of the approaching stampede, but before he could turn around, two pairs of arms wrapped around him and he had Kota and her mother weeping into his shoulders crying out "thank you" every time they paused in their crying. Harry was altogether very stunned by all this and was very thankful when Mr. Stenson pulled the two girls off of him. Mrs. Stenson ran into the kitchen, wiping her tears on her sleeve promising to cook up a huge feast in celebration. Now Harry really felt the pressure for this spell to work.

"Harry, I was wrong. I guess maybe you can change the world," Dakota said to him with a huge smile. Harry only hoped that he could.

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That night, Harry and Kota were watching a movie she got for Christmas when suddenly, the front door burst open with a bang as it crashed against the wall. Harry jumped and looked over in horror to see his worst nightmare. Uncle Vernon was standing in the doorway.

* * * * *

A/N: Hey guys. Thanks to those of you who are sticking with this fic. Just hang in there and it'll pick up really soon! And remember to review!!

* * * * *

Uncle Vernon's eyes fell onto Harry and a malicious grin broke over his face. In two steps, he had reached Harry and grabbed a handful of his hair. Mr. and Mrs. Stenson were running down the stairs to try to stop Harry's uncle.

"Ah.... kidnapping, Stenson. That could land you in jail. Especially since you deliberately disobeyed a court order, judges don't look too kindly on that," Uncle Vernon growled at Mr. Stenson.

"Let that boy go right now!" cried Mrs. Stenson, but Uncle Vernon only pulled Harry closer into his grasp, one chubby arm snaking around his neck, the other pulling out a gun and resting it at Harry's temple. Harry stilled and Kota let out a cry of surprise. Mr. and Mrs. Stenson's attitude changed from ready to attack, to surprise, to a calmer pleading.

"Dursley, don't do anything rash. If you hurt Harry in any way, you know you'll be in more trouble with the police than we would ever be. Just put the gun down," Mr. Stenson tried, putting his hands in the air in front of him as one would to calm a growling dog.

"Oh this thing," Uncle Vernon asked giving the gun a little shake. "Oh well I found this on Harry. I've suspected for a while that you might be getting him involved in a gang of some sort and had kidnapped him. When I came to rescue him from your clutches, I found this on him, and if any of you try to attack me, I'll make sure that no one will doubt that I only shot out of self-defense." He had obviously thought out the story in advance and unfortunately, the police or judges would probably believe him. As his uncle started shuffling backwards towards the door, Harry had no choice but to be dragged along with him.

"I'm going to call a friend who just happens to be in a high position in the police force to make sure you don't take any strolls too close to my house, and if any of you do come, I'll have warned my friend about Harry's gang involvement. If I have to shoot him at any point out of 'self- defense' I'll have many sympathizers," Uncle Vernon said

with a final sneer as he pushed Harry out the door in front of him. He shoved the gun into his back in such a way that if anyone who didn't know what was going on saw them on the street, they wouldn't have the slightest clue that anything was wrong.

With one final glance back, Harry saw a new set of tears streaming down the females' faces, but a far different kind of tears than he had seen just that morning.

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When they got back into the Dursley house and the door was closed to any nosy neighbors, Uncle Vernon punched Harry in the face causing him to fall to the floor. Then he grabbed Harry by his hair and practically dragged him to his old cupboard, threw him inside, and locked the door.

"Consider this your warning, boy," Uncle Vernon hissed through the vent on the door before slamming it shut.

Harry heard his uncle make a phone call (presumably to that friend he mentioned) and told him his story: kidnapping, gangs, and all. It might have been entertaining if it wasn't such a serious situation. He then simply went upstairs and to bed.

Harry lay in his old bed, which seemed extremely tiny compared to the double bed that he slept in at the Stensons, staring at the ceiling. It seemed that he had got off far too easy. Granted there was a cut on his cheek where his uncle's middle knuckle had hit, but Harry had been afraid for his life. Harry could come up with only three explanations.

First possibility: Uncle Vernon could have been in a supremely good mood for scoring points in the family feud with the Stensons.

Second: he was lulling Harry into a false sense of safety and was waiting to strike when it was least expected.

Third: if not those then the only other explanation was that aliens had taken over his uncle's body and were planning to dominate the world,

trying to act somewhat like his uncle to pull off their disguise but not truly concerned with an insignificant human being like Harry.

In any case, he'd have to be on his guard.

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Harry lived the next week on practically no food and with a heavy workload. Last year, it wouldn't have been as bad when his stomach was smaller, but Harry could only figure that it must've expanded at Hogwarts and with the Stensons. At times he almost couldn't stand because of the gnawing pain in his stomach.

Along with this he was forced to do chores all day, everywhere except for the front yard. Uncle Vernon didn't want Harry to talk with the cops that were stationed in front of their house to guard against the Stensons.

Harry was thankful that he only had to wait until January forth to return to school, and as long as he didn't do anything to irritate his uncle, he would survive to see it. So he did his chores and ate his meager portions of food without complaint.

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Finally, it was January third, the day before going back to Hogwarts. He cautiously mentioned this to his uncle along with the fact that the Stensons still had his things.

"Er...if it would be easier for you, I'm sure Dakota Stenson could drive me. I mean it's really out of your way and that way I'd get my things and..."

"Don't even think about it," Uncle Vernon cut him off. "I will drive you and we'll briefly stop by their house to pick up your ruddy things."

Harry nodded and went back to doing the dishes. He thought everything was going pretty good, all things considered. He had been walking on thin ice since December 26, but it looked like he was going to make it.

While lost in his thoughts, Harry became aware of a soft tapping at the window. He looked over to see Hedwig quietly tapping the window with her beak. Harry peeked in to make sure the Dursleys were still glued to the television and opened the window extremely slowly, leaving the water running to divert any suspicion. He took off the small piece of paper attached to Hedwig's leg and read a sloppily scribbled note from Dakota.

HARRY-

DAD HAD SOME KIND OF ATTACK OR SOMETHING. WE'RE GOING TO THE HOSPITAL. HIS CANCER'S SPEEDING UP. I THINK HE MIGHT DIE. PLEASE COME QUICK.
-KOTA

Harry couldn't believe it. Mr. Stenson was supposed to have until February! He quickly scribbled on the back of the note:

I'LL BE THERE ASAP BUT I HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL THE DURSLEYS ARE ASLEEP. JUST GET YOUR DAD TO HANG ON UNTIL THEN. IF IT BECOMES AN ABSOLUTE EMERGENCY, SEND HEDWIG RIGHT AWAY.
-HARRY

Harry quietly whispered for Hedwig to take the note to Kota. Hedwig flew off quietly and Harry shut the window behind her. Finishing the dishes, he kept watch at the reflection in the window of the Dursleys gathered around the glowing screen in the living room.

Finally, the half hour was over, ending the show and the dishes. Harry went into his cupboard, his uncle locking it as usual before going up to bed. Harry listened carefully until there were no more sounds of any of his relatives creeping around.

He pulled out his wand, which he always kept in his deep pants pocket and whispered "Alohomora," unlocking the door.

With a glance out the front window, he saw that the police car was still stationed outside. He therefore tiptoed to the backdoor and crept out, thankful that the Dursleys were all quick to fall asleep.

He climbed over the fence ending up in the neighbor's backyard. He climbed over a few more fences until he was a safe distance away from 4 Privet Drive. Making sure the street was deserted, he ran to the Stensons, using the key they had given him to get in.

He raced up to the guest-room where his trunk still lay. He quickly dug out the potion needed for the spell. He had made it back at Hogwarts just as a precaution, in case he might need it early or if not, for practice. He grabbed the paper with the spell written on it, which he had luckily figured out how to pronounce and had memorized. He decided to bring it just in case his brain froze.

Once again making sure the street was empty, he darted out the door and basically sprinted the three miles to the hospital.

He entered the white and clean building, out of breath, only barely able to ask the receptionist for the correct room number, and then dashed there. As he approached the room, he saw Kota and Mrs. Stenson outside sitting in chairs both looking worriedly at the floor. Kota was biting her nails, as was normal for her during suspenseful parts of movies. When they saw him they both leaped up.

"How is he?" Harry asked while approaching.

"He's all right for now. The doctors say that he only has a few days left though," Mrs. Stenson started. She then gasped. "Harry, what happened?" she asked about his cheek, which now had a fading bruise and a scab where it had split.

"It's nothing. I'm fine, really," he said looking at the ground. "Can I see him?"

Mrs. Stenson nodded sadly and ushered him into the nearest door.

When they entered the room, Mr. Stenson was sleeping and Mrs. Stenson had to go shake him awake. He looked exhausted and

shaky. Harry thought briefly about how he would probably look the same way in a few months, but when that happened, there was no getting out of it.

"Hey there Harry," Mr. Stenson started, scooting up into a sitting position against his pillows and ushered him over with a smile. As Harry approached, Mr. Stenson's smile turned into a deep frown. "He hit you again." It wasn't a question. Harry once again looked sheepishly at the floor.

"Yeah, well, it doesn't matter, I'm going back to school again tomorrow."

"Well, we're going to think of a way to get you out of there, okay?" Harry nodded.

"All right then, are you ready to try the spell?" Harry asked getting a bit nervous. "You do remember about the possible consequences, right?"

"Yes of course, why don't you give me a minute with my wife and daughter just in case."

Harry waited outside the room as the Stensons said their goodbyes in case it really would be goodbye. Meanwhile, Harry spent the time reading again over the spell, more to get his mind off the butterflies fluttering around his stomach than to learn it better.

Finally, a tearful Mrs. Stenson called him back in and then took a crying Kota out of the room. He took an empty cup off of the nightstand and filled it with half the potion. He then gave it to a waiting Mr. Stenson who looked at it quite skeptically.

"Er...Harry, what exactly is in this?"

"Well some eye of newt, bat droppings, and dog vomit."

Mr. Stenson looked horrified.

Harry grinned. "Just kidding. Actually, I don't think you do really want to know what's in it; I find it's best never to ask with potions. Remember to focus on expelling the cancer, okay? Concentrate as hard as you can. So, just drink up and be prepared for an awful taste," he said raising the vial to his own lips.

"Wait, Harry," Mr. Stenson said putting up a hand. "Just in case this is the last time I can say it, I want you to know that if I ever had a son, I hope he would've turned out as great as you."

Harry was a bit stunned. Nobody had ever said anything like that before. After a long pause of not knowing what to say, Harry finally spoke.

"Well don't worry, you'll still have time to have that son."

With that Harry downed his portion of the potion in one gulp. It tasted horrible enough to cause a shiver down Harry's spine and consider trying to wipe it off his tongue, but he refrained from doing so. It also made him feel a bit dizzy and felt like something cold was swimming around inside of him. 'At least it's better than Polyjuice,' he thought.

"Well, that had to be the most disgusting thing I've ever tasted," Mr. Stenson said with a slightly green look on his face.

"Ditto, that." Harry took out his wand and took a deep breath. "All right here it goes. Just lie down and close your eyes. I'm guessing this won't be the most pleasant feeling in the world."

Mr. Stenson nodded and lay back, shutting his eyes. Harry closed his eyes as well and willed all of his concentration into the words he needed to say and the effect it was supposed to have.

"Anackarinina demienne hemeness. Medetatu hatlaeh. Detutame recnac." He repeated the phrase three times and opened his eyes.

Mr. Stenson's hands were balled into fists and his face was in a grimace of pain. A green glow surrounded him and began turning redder and redder until there was no trace of green. Mr. Stenson became visibly relaxed but was still gasping for breath, keeping his

eyes tightly closed as Harry had instructed only in order to prevent him from somehow seeing the cancer being transferred.

The light began to gather into a ball above his chest. Suddenly, a jet of the light burst out and hit Harry in the chest. It was incredible pain, like the Cruciatus curse but concentrated in one area. He dropped his wand and slapped his hands over where the light was entering but the light went right through his hands.

The ball of light became smaller as it traveled along the beam into Harry's chest. The more light that entered, the harder it was for him to breathe. He felt himself sink to his knees, gasping for air. The last thing he saw before collapsing to the ground was the last of the light being sucked into his chest.

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"Harry. Harry!"

Harry felt a pair of hands gently shaking him and he opened his eyes to see Kota standing over him. He tried to say something to her but it came out as a groan.

Then, suddenly remembering why he was lying on a cold, hard floor, he sat up quickly causing his head to swim. Kota helped him stand.

"Harry, are you all right?" Kota asked frantically. Harry guessed that they hadn't expected to come in to find him unconscious on the floor. Well, he hadn't exactly known about that either.

"Yeah, I'm just a little light headed. Big spells can take a lot out of you. How's your dad?"

Instead of answering him, she stepped aside to give him a view of the hospital bed. Mr. Stenson was sitting up, very much alive and looking much more lively than he had before. Mrs. Stenson was sitting beside him holding his hand and silently crying through a smile. Both were looking torn between worried for Harry and happy that Mr. Stenson was very much alive, but as Harry walked over, their worries were relieved.

"How do you feel, Mr. Stenson?"

"Better than I have in quite a while. I can't feel any of the symptoms. I think you were right about it not being the most pleasant feeling in the world though," he laughed.

"Well, before you get your hopes too high, can you get re-tested for it?" He hated the idea that after getting everyone so hopeful, he would let them down and it would really still be there.

Mr. Stenson pushed a button to call for the doctor.

When the doctor did come in his first reaction was to shoot a surprised look at Harry.

"I'm sorry, but only family members are allowed to be visiting."

"He is family," Mr. Stenson said winking at Harry. The doctor looked skeptical but decided to not pursue it.

"So, Mr. Stenson, what seems to be the problem," he said referring to being called in.

"Actually it's the opposite. I'd like to get tested for cancer again." The doctor was taken aback looking at Mr. Stenson like he was crazy and then glancing guiltily at the rest of the occupants in the room.

"Er...Mr. Stenson, this type of cancer doesn't just turn around like that, especially so late..."

"Listen, I'll pay whatever it costs, but I want the tests done all right?" There was no arguing with him. The doctor just nodded his head and drew a blood sample.

"There's a quick test we can do right in the lab in this hospital so it shouldn't take long. It should be fairly easy to tell if the cancer has disappeared, but try not to get your hopes up," the doctor said, exiting the room.

After about an hour, the doctor came back in looking a bit dazed, mystified. It reminded Harry of Lockhart after he had lost his memory.

"It seems..." he paused and shook his head as though not believing what he was saying. "It seems that in at least preliminary tests, we...we can't find any trace of the cancer. We'll have to do more extensive tests as we had to do originally to see if there's any in there but.... well, frankly, Mr. Stenson, you are a medical miracle. I guess you're free to go and we'll call you if we find anything." He opened and closed his mouth as if trying to say something but not knowing what, turned around and left the room.

Everyone laughed and Harry was showered by hugs and thanks.

The Stensons drove Harry home, or near to his house as to not get in trouble with the police . Harry told them that he would see them briefly tomorrow to get his things from their house and waved goodbye as they drove away.

As Harry neared 4 Privet Drive, he noticed that the police car was no longer parked outside the house. Either they always snuck off in the middle of the night to get donuts or Uncle Vernon had said that they would no longer need them after January 3rd, which, being after midnight, was yesterday. The police must have taken him quite literally on that.

With no one watching the house, Harry crossed the front yard, jumped the fence and went in the back door, being the only one unlocked.

The house was totally dark and Harry tiptoed back to his cupboard, extremely pleased that the spell worked, though slightly dreading the effects. He didn't feel anything besides weariness from the amount of magic he had used, so he supposed that he was starting at the beginning of the illness.

He made sure the path was clear and went to his cupboard and opened the door, turning to step inside. He started to step in but suddenly heard the kitchen door creak open behind him.

He whirled around to see his uncle standing in the doorway with a malicious grin on his face.

A/N: Well there you go! A rather long chappy just for you guys. Isn't Uncle Vernon creepy? Rather like a murderer from a horror movie if I do say so myself. Poor Harry, it looks like he's in trouble and let's just say he's not just going to get grounded. How do I know this? Because I've already written the whole story of course! So, please please review and I'll get the next chapter up in a few days!

* * * * *

"So, sneaking out in the middle of the night to see that family," he spat.

"It was an emergency..." Harry started but was slammed up against the wall by his uncle.

"I was getting worried that you wouldn't make another mistake, that I wouldn't be able to teach you your lesson. When I found you missing I sent the police away. Wouldn't want any reports of domestic disturbance, would we?" he sneered.

"Please, Uncle Vernon, I'm going back to school tomorrow. I'll be gone, out of your..." Harry was interrupted with being backhanded to the floor, splitting the cut on his cheek back open. His uncle stalked over and Harry tried to back away but couldn't seem to get into a standing position quickly enough. A boot connected with his stomach, stunning him. It hit again and again until...

"Vernon?"

With his uncle's foot on his chest pinning him to the floor, Harry looked over to see his Aunt Petunia at the top of the stairs looking sleepy.

"Aunt Petunia, help me, please! Get him off of me! I can't breathe!" His uncle's foot pushed harder on his chest and with the large amount that he weighed, Harry couldn't squirm away no matter how he tried.

"Vernon, the boy is going back to that school tomorrow..." his aunt began.

'Thank you!' Harry's mind screamed. 'She's going to talk some sense into him.'

"...don't mark up his face too much or they'll figure it out. I don't need those people banging on the doors."

Harry's face fell. This couldn't be happening. His uncle looked ready to kill him and his mother's own sister didn't even care.

"What's going on?" Dudley came into view beside his mother. At seeing the scene below, his eyes lit up like it was Christmas again. "Oh boy, can I watch mum? Oh please!"

"No Duddykins, not tonight. A growing boy like you needs his rest and I don't want you to have to see that horrid boy get what's coming to him."

Harry was stunned. Was this some kind of show for them? He knew that his aunt and cousin had known that he had been beaten during the summer, but didn't realize that they actually supported the idea.

After much arguing, Aunt Petunia ushered Dudley back to his room and herself went back to sleep.

'Well I'm glad she can sleep so peacefully while her only nephew is getting murdered,' he thought sarcastically.

Uncle Vernon now turned his attention back to Harry. Hatred was burning in his eyes. His jaw clenched as he put all of his weight on the foot pinning down Harry, grinding it into his chest.

Harry let out a scream of agony as he felt and heard some of his ribs snap. His head swam as he tried to breathe despite the stabbing pains when he inhaled. The pressure was finally released and Harry was forcibly dragged into standing position. He kicked his uncle in the knee and tried to get away but the only result was being thrown into the low glass table in the living room.

When his body hit it, the glass shattered. He felt shards of it digging into his back and felt cuts on the back of head. Harry moaned and tried to sit up but Uncle Vernon grabbed his foot and began dragging him away from the table, causing the glass to be pushed further into his back and cut his skin.

He screamed in agony, kicking out with his free foot at the arms holding his other one, making them eventually let go. He tried to

wriggle away but was stopped by several kicks to the chest, connecting with his already broken ribs. Harry couldn't even scream now, just focusing on staying conscious and breathing. He started slipping in and out of consciousness, only vaguely aware of the end of the beating and being dragged back to and thrown into his cupboard, along with the clicking of the lock.

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The next morning, Harry woke up with a fever that had developed during the night, most likely in connection with his injuries. He spent quite a while just trying to stand and make it to the bathroom. He took a shower to clean off the blood that caked his body and hair. He attempted to pick the glass out of his back but he couldn't reach. Each time he tried to maneuver his arm around to grab a piece, pain shot through his whole body. When he finally did get a piece, he realized it hurt less to just keep it in, and he'd worry about it later when he could have pain-relieving potions to help with the task.

He threw away his bloody, torn clothes and pulled on some more of Dudley's old clothes. This covered up all his bodily injuries except for the bruise and cut on his cheek. He was thankful that his hair was so dark as it covered up the cuts and bruises on the back of his head very well. If anyone asked, he could just say that he had gotten into a small fight with Dudley.

He practiced walking around some more, trying to hide any trace of suffering on his face. He went into the kitchen and cooked breakfast as usual, though it was more difficult this time, as he felt so sick. Each movement sent waves of pain shooting through his body. He didn't bother sneaking food for himself as he was already on the verge of throwing up.

As the Dursleys came down, he served them all without a word and they all talked normally. He did have to make sure to dodge Dudley's smelting stick a few times as he was trying to poke at Harry's injuries.

He went to get his stuff together and remembered that he didn't have it. He groaned. It was going to be hard to fool the Stensons since they already knew what was going on and the two females of the family

were very huggy, especially when they were happy with Harry. However, there was nothing he could do except try to get in and out as fast as possible.

Harry and his uncle drove to the Stenson's in silence. The only words spoken were when they got there.

"I want you in and out of that house in five minutes or I'm calling the police to say they kidnapped you again, and I assure you I'll have them arrested," he sneered. Harry just nodded and got out of the car.

When Kota answered the door, Harry plastered a smile on his face and hoped it looked real enough. He entered and as he sensed Kota coming to give him a welcoming hug, he started quickly up the stairs.

"Sorry, I don't really have time for hellos. I have only a few minutes to get my stuff before my uncle has you guys arrested."

"Sure Harry, no problem," she said following him into the guest room to help him get his things together. "What happened to your cheek though? It looks worse than last night."

"Yeah I know, Dudley and I got into a bit of a tiff this morning and I think it split back open, the fat git," he said. Kota looked slightly skeptical but stayed silent.

The two walked quickly back downstairs carrying Harry's things, a task quite difficult for Harry, but he disguised it well.

What surprised him was that Uncle Vernon was on the front walk now, having a heated discussion with Mr. and Mrs. Stenson. Harry slipped by them with his things and waved goodbye, heading toward his uncle.

"Dursley, we're going to find out a way to get Harry from you. He deserves better than your pathetic excuse for a family," Mr. Stenson yelled. Harry hoped things wouldn't get too heated right before he was going to be in a car with his uncle.

"Er...Mr. Stenson, it's all right. You guys can talk about this later. My train's going to be leaving and I can't be late for it," Harry said trying to calm everyone. Mr. Stenson nodded at Harry, realizing not to make the situation worse at the moment. Harry walked back to the car with his uncle, and climbed into the passenger side seat. Uncle Vernon got into the driver's side and turned back and sneered out the window:

"Don't mess with me Stenson, or I can make things extremely bad for some people." With that note, he grabbed Harry by the shoulder and dug his thumb into the back right near where a piece of glass was still embedded in his skin. Harry's cool exterior shattered as he let out a small cry of pain and his whole body tensed up. His uncle let go and Harry sat back trying to catch his breath, with only the wish of getting to King's Cross Station and going to Hogwarts.

Vernon winked at the Stensons with that same evil grin on his face and then stepped on the gas as Mrs. Stenson burst out in tears and Mr. Stenson started out the door towards Uncle Vernon. Harry's uncle sped off before he could reach them, Mr. Stenson yelling profanities after Uncle Vernon.

"That'll show him to mess with me," he said, too overjoyed for Harry's comfort. Harry remained silent, once again focusing on breathing and not losing his stomach.

Uncle Vernon's hand shot out and caught Harry's chin, yanking it to face his. "You're pathetic, boy, did you know that? Can't even defend yourself. Your parents would have been ashamed," he said throwing Harry's chin away in disgust. "And don't you dare speak a word of this to any of your freak friends. Wouldn't want to disappoint even more people."

"I won't," Harry muttered, turning to stare out the window. They were both silent for the rest of the ride. Harry felt disgusted with himself. To the Dursleys, the only family he had ever known, he was merely a servant, a pawn in the feud with the Stensons, and a punching bag for his uncle. Those were the only reasons they kept him around.

Though he always tried his best to ignore every word that exited his uncle's mouth, what he had said hit a button and Harry couldn't help but see some truth behind it.

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Finally, after one last warning from his uncle to not breathe a word of what happened to anyone, Harry entered King's Cross Station. He was a bit later than he would have liked, always trying to be a little bit early ever since missing the train second year.

He got to the train as the whistle began to blow and only a few stragglers were jumping on. He heaved his trunk on board with some struggle and following Neville's directions, made his way to the compartment that Ron and Hermione were in.

When he walked in, his two friends sighed in relief.

"We thought you had missed the train, mate," Ron said. Harry sat down next to Hermione.

"Nah, just a little late. So how were your breaks?"

They all began discussing their breaks, Harry gently changing his story to exclude the ordeal with Mr. Stenson's cancer or how he had been treated at the Dursleys. They did get a kick out of Harry's description of the reactions he got when revealing that he was a wizard.

When the cut on the side of his face came up, he smoothly covered it with the same story he had told Kota, but added that he had given Dudley a bloody nose, to even the imaginary score.

After a while, the lack of sleep, weariness still lingering from the night before, and his injuries, began to catch up with him. Hermione had moved to the opposite bench to show Ron what Muggle pictures looked like and to attempt to explain why they weren't moving, so Harry lay down on the bench without his friends paying too much attention and quickly fell asleep.

"Harry, will you explain to Ron that Muggle pictures...Oh Ron look, Harry fell asleep."

"Yeah, well it's probably a good thing, he looks like he hasn't gotten sleep in ages."

The two got back to talking, but were interrupted by a soft groan from Harry.

"Do you think he's having one of his dreams?" asked Ron worriedly.

"I don't know," Hermione said in the same tone. She walked over to Harry and began calling his name to try to wake him up, but Harry's face just grimaced. She noticed that Harry seemed to be slightly sweating and curiously put a hand on his forehead. "Oh my God, Ron, he's burning up!"

"He has a fever?" Ron asked even more concerned and getting up as well.

"Yeah, and a very high one judging by the temperature of his forehead. He looks like he's in pain."

They both started calling to him louder. When that didn't work, Ron grabbed his shoulders and shook him gently. Both of them gasped when Harry's eyes shot open with a sharp intake of breath. His eyes were slightly glazed over as if he was hurting. He started shivering.

"Harry, you're sick!" Hermione informed him.

"Yeah, I think I may have come down with something last night, but don't worry, I don't think it's contagious," he winced, starting to sit up but two pairs of hands gently pushed him back down.

"No Harry, lay down right now. Hold on, we're going to try to get your fever down a little," Hermione said, running out of the room and coming quickly back with one of her Muggle shirts damp with cold water from the bathroom.

"You guys, don't worry! I'm fine really." To prove his point, Harry promptly stood up. Unfortunately, his body didn't exactly agree with his ego and immediately the room began to spin and his knees started to buckle.

Luckily Ron quickly grasped his friend's upper arms and helped him fall gently back onto the seat and pushed him back into a laying position.

"Nice try, Harry. You don't have to be Mr. Tough Guy all the time you know," Ron lightly scolded him, with a concerned smile. Hermione promptly put the makeshift washcloth on Harry's forehead.

"Ron's right, Harry."

"Ron's right? I really must be sick if I've started hallucinating." Ron laughed. Hermione put her hands on her hips and then sat down next to Harry's head.

"Does your skin hurt, Harry?" Hermione asked looking down into his eyes.

"Huh?" It did, but he had been desperately hoping that his friends wouldn't figure that out.

"Well I know that when I get fevers, sometimes everything hurts along with my skin. The way you reacted to Ron when he tried to wake you up..." she trailed off remembering back to it.

"Well, I guess, sort of. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to scare you guys," he quickly agreed with Hermione as to not lead to any more assumptions about his ailments.

"Hey mate, don't worry about it. Why don't you try to get some shuteye before we get to Hogwarts. Then we'll go see Madam Pomfrey and see what she can do for you," Ron said.

"No really, I'm fine. I really don't need to see Madam Pomfrey," he said briskly.

Both of his friends looked a little surprised by his reaction and very skeptical. In truth, he didn't want there to be any situation where someone could find out about his home life and Madam Pomfrey could easily find out something like that. Instead, however, he tried a different explanation.

"Come on, you guys, I don't want to be stuck in the hospital wing the first night back. I'll miss the feast!" In reality, Harry didn't even want to think about food at the moment as his stomach wasn't in tiptop shape, but this explanation seemed to at least grab Ron's sympathy.

"Well, we'll see how you're feeling when we get there, and if you're better, we won't carry you off to the hospital wing."

Harry nodded in agreement, causing Hermione to have to readjust the makeshift washcloth.

Harry felt very awkward and kept begging them to let him do things for himself, but they wouldn't hear anything of it. Instead, Hermione kept checking his temperature to see if it had gone down at all, and cooling the rag often with a simple spell. Ron had gotten out a few of his robes and put them on top of Harry like blankets under Hermione's orders that he needed to stay warm.

"Harry, haven't you ever had someone take care of you when you were sick before," asked Ron in a tone that obviously expected a positive answer.

"No," Harry said sleepily. His friends exchanged a look of surprise and sympathy, but Harry, who had once again begun to fall asleep, didn't notice.

"Well when you were younger, your aunt and uncle must've taken care of you when you got ill," Hermione insisted.

"No, I always took care of myself. Plus, the doctor's office isn't too far from the Dursley's house so I could just walk there if I needed to. And I aced the First-Aid class I had to take in school." Harry's eyes were closed and he was just murmuring the words, not even really

registering what he was saying. A few minutes later, his breathing slowed and Ron and Hermione knew he was asleep.

"Is he going to be all right? I mean, whenever we get sick with a fever, Mum just gives us potions that work pretty quickly, so I don't really know what it's like trying to cure it the Muggle way," said Ron quietly.

"Yeah, I think he'll be fine. He must have the flu or something and he's probably been ignoring it as, well, he's Harry."

Luckily, the rest of the train ride went very smoothly, without a visit from Malfoy and the gang. While Harry slept, Ron and Hermione played wizards chess but threatened the pieces to stop playing if they weren't quiet, never forgetting to make sure Harry was covered in the robes and that the shirt on his forehead was still cold.

When they were almost there, Hermione woke up Harry being careful not to shake him in case his skin still hurt. They all changed into their robes and then it was time for Hermione's expert opinion. She felt Harry's forehead and frowned.

"Harry, I don't think your fever's gone down too much. We should take you to Madam Pomfrey."

"Hermione, I'm fine. Listen, I'll go up to Madam Pomfrey's torture chamber after the feast, all right," Harry insisted, with no intention of actually going up after the feast. Hermione had no choice but to agree.

"You only think it's a torture chamber because she makes you stay in bed all the time," Ron laughed.

"Do you know how tight she puts those sheets? I feel like I'm being mummified! Plus all those foul tasting potions...it's enough to make anyone run screaming the other way!"

Harry still didn't feel very well, but the sleep had done him a world of good. He no longer felt as dizzy and his back was pleasantly numb, though that probably wasn't the best sign. He figured that he'd try to find a spell to help him get out the glass soon. Either that or fake

some kind of accident where it could have happened, though that would be very tough to pull off.

The Welcome-Back Feast seemed to take longer and was less enjoyable than usual. Of course, he would usually have already been at school and be welcoming back his classmates. He didn't touch his food, only moved it around on his plate trying not to smell it too much nor watch others eat, as he was feeling more and more nauseous in doing so.

Meanwhile, Hermione and Ron were eyeing him skeptically, regretting their decision to let Harry escape medical attention.

"Hey, Harry, aren't you going to eat anything?" Ron asked.

"Er...I'm not really hungry."

"See, Harry, you're ill. You haven't eaten anything all day. Maybe we should go up to the hospital wing now," Hermione scolded.

"Listen I'm fine, see." Harry popped a piece of potato into his mouth and reluctantly swallowed. He took a few more bites, which seemed to appease Hermione.

Apparently, though, this hadn't been the brightest idea. His stomach seemed to have been injured after all. All of a sudden, Harry's stomach tightened and he gasped in pain, dropping his fork and grabbing his friends' attention.

"Harry!"

He quickly realized that he was going to lose the food he had just eaten and got up as quickly as possible, hand covering his mouth, and raced out of Great Hall toward the nearest bathroom, the Slytherins laughing at him as he passed their table.

He heard his two friends run in after him as he fell over a toilet and started throwing up.

He couldn't stop for a long while, vaguely feeling Hermione's hand rubbing his back as he felt like he was turning his stomach inside out, Hermione not realizing this wasn't exactly comforting her friend. He had been sick before, but nothing like this. His stomach felt like knives were stabbing into his abdomen.

Finally, he knew he had emptied his stomach and Ron handed him a bunch of paper towels to wipe off his face. He leaned back against the wall of the cubicle and wiped off his face, but when he pulled the towels away they had blood on them. Hermione had noticed the same thing when she had gone to flush the toilet.

"Oh my God, Harry, you're throwing up blood!" she practically screamed. Harry smiled weakly.

"Not anymore."

Then turning to Ron who wasn't quite sure if this was supposed to happen, Hermione said, "That's not normal Ron!"

"That's it, we're going to the hospital wing now!" Ron demanded pulling his friend up onto his feet. His friends stood on either side of him and pulled his arms around their shoulders for support. Harry was going to protest but thought this was less embarrassing than collapsing halfway there. He allowed himself to be helped up to the hospital wing.

"Madam Pomfrey!" Ron yelled as they got through the door. The hospital wing was empty, no sign of the nurse in sight. Harry was helped to the nearest bed. As Ron was running to retrieve the nurse, Madam Pomfrey hurried in from her office.

"What's all the screaming about?"

"It's nothing really, Madam Pomfrey, I just have a touch of the flu. I think a fever reducing potion along with something for my stomach might do the trick," Harry cut off Hermione hoping this wouldn't end in an examination.

"He was also throwing up blood, ma'am," Ron added after figuring out that Harry wasn't going to.

"Well that's certainly not normal," the nurse murmured hurrying to the potion's cupboard to grab some fever reducing potion. A glimmer of pride shone across Hermione's face as her earlier statement was confirmed, but was drowned in worry when her friend moaned, grabbing his stomach.

"Try some of this, dear," Madam Pomfrey said handing him a glass of fever reducing potion mixed with a bit of potion to relieve nausea. "I usually don't trust my patients' assessments of their maladies, but since you've become so good with magical medicine, I'm guessing you know what you're talking about. Of course, the throwing up blood makes it seem like something else might be wrong..."

" No, don't worry, ma'am. One time when I was young, I got food poisoning really bad. It did something to the lining of my stomach so that whenever I get sick blood comes up. Trust me, it's normal for me," Harry quickly lied. He had thought up that story on the way to the hospital wing and by the looks on the three other faces in the room, it was quite believable.

All of a sudden his stomach cramped up again and another moan escaped from his lips as he pressed his free hand into it trying to get it to stop hurting. He almost dropped the cup in his other hand but Hermione, sensing danger, quickly grabbed it from him.

"Harry? Here quick, drink this." Hermione held out the glass towards him and Harry met it with a shaky hand. His mind was so distracted he didn't even register the awful taste as it slid down his throat.

After only a few seconds, his stomach stopped cramping up since his body was no longer trying to throw up. He gradually felt less achy and came to be at a more normal temperature rather than too cold and too hot at the same time.

Harry refused Madam Pomfrey's attempts to keep him overnight to try to cure his stomach lining. He told her that the problem didn't bother him and slid out the door with Hermione and Ron.

"Now was that so horrible?" Hermione asked now in a much better mood.

"How are you feeling?" Ron asked still looking slightly worried. He had gotten really scared when they had found Harry in the bathroom, and only got increasingly afraid to see the blood and his best friend moaning in pain. He had never seen anyone so sick.

"As good as new. At least I wasn't taken prisoner for the night," Harry said with a smile.

This seemed to assure Ron and all was normal walking back to the dorms for the night.

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Disclaimer: Yes, the amazing truth comes out: I do not own Harry Potter. All that wonderful stuff belongs to J.K. Rowling.

Author's Note: There was a great question brought up by Eowyn of Ithilien. Why wouldn't Harry just stop his uncle with magic since it's not against the rules for Christmas holiday (at least in this fic)? My answer is that Harry has been not only physically abused by the Dursleys, but mentally as well for his entire life. He's more frightened of his uncle than Voldemort! (Well, in this story.) When he can see that Uncle Vernon is angry, he sort of freezes up and goes into panic mode, as you will see again in this story. He can't always think rationally, as actually does happen in real life when you're in a dangerous situation. He's never been allowed to use magic at home before and while being attacked, he's less likely to think of it. Plus, even if he had thought of it, he was too busy getting the stuffing beaten out of him to get his wand out of his pocket. Sorry if there's still some doubt about it, but as I always say, when in doubt just nod and smile.

Thank you to my reviewers, especially Firemask and the others who have stayed with my story. You guys honestly make my day. Thank you to all that put me on their favorites list as well. It's so surprising and so appreciated. I've been trying to get this chapter up forever, but something's happening with my quotes and apostrophes. Well, on with the story and I'm hoping this will work.

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Without the fever to distract him, Harry awoke the next morning barely able to move in result of his injuries on his back, ribs, and stomach. He even had several gashes on the backs of his arms from the glass.

After everyone had gone to breakfast, Harry took off his shirt and looked over his shoulder into the bathroom mirror. It didn't look good. The cuts all looked angry and red.

He pointed his wand over his shoulder and aimed at one shard of glass embedded in his skin and nervously said "Accio." The piece

shot upwards out of his back, cutting it even more. Harry had to clamp a hand over his mouth to muffle a scream.

'Well that's not the way to do it,' he decided, cleaning up the blood with toilet paper and putting his shirt back on. He would need to find another method.

He focused on walking normally down to the Great Hall. He was very hungry, not having eaten well since the Stenson's and losing any scrap that was in his stomach the night before. It greatly pleased his two friends to see him eat so much.

He made it through his classes, hiding any pain caused by sudden movements and such. He was having a relatively good day, but his mood diminished when they began trooping to Potions, the last class of the day.

Potions went fairly normally. They were brewing cleaning potions that would lift out dirt from carpets and such. Later there would be much joking about how Snape should use it on his hair and talk of slipping it into his shampoo. (Of course the mere thought of entering Snape's bathroom destroyed this plan immediately.)

At the end of class, when everyone was hurrying to get their things, Snape watched as Neville accidentally bumped Harry into a desk, apologizing as he passed, eager to get out of the class. Nobody but Snape noticed Harry's stomach bang into the desk. It wasn't that bad of a hit, but Harry gasped in pain, his knees nearly buckling. His hands gripped the edge of the table so hard his knuckles turned white while he breathed deeply as though trying to relieve some kind of pain. He quickly got control of himself and grabbed his bag. Snape knew something was wrong and followed his first instinct: giving detentions.

"Potter, you will see me for detention at 7:00 sharp."

"Detention? What for?" Harry asked confused. What had he done wrong?

"We will discuss that tonight." Harry started to protest but Snape cut him off. "Now leave. I don't want to see you again until detention." He pointed a finger toward the door and Harry realized he was defeated. He walked out the door and began grumbling to his friends, gaining much sympathy from Ron especially. Snape tried to put the boy out of his mind but couldn't get the picture of him leaning over the desk out of his head.

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At 7:00, Harry found himself entering the Potions room still confused about Snape's reasoning. It wasn't unusual to get detention from Snape, but he always received some explanation, no matter how untrue or unjust. He approached his teacher and asked why he was there. Snape ignored the question.

"Well Mr. Potter, today I observed something quite unusual. Since when does bumping into a desk hurt one so incredibly much?"

Harry was dumbstruck. "Er...excuse me Professor?"

"I think you know what I'm talking about and I'd like an explanation."

"Listen Professor, I don't know what you're talking about, and if this is why I'm down here I'm going to be going now."

Harry turned to leave but Snape reached out and grabbed his shoulder to stop him, his finger landing right on a piece of glass. Through Harry's shirt, sweater, and cloak, Snape didn't realize what he was doing, but in grasping Harry's shoulder, he pushed the piece of glass further in.

Harry half gasped, half whimpered at this and quickly knocked Snape's hand away. Pain engulfed his body and his knees buckled. Snape's mouth dropped as Harry collapsed, watching him as he lay on the floor gasping for breath, moaning in pain. The boy made several attempts to sit up, but each time he put pressure on his hands to push himself up, he would end up falling right back down clutching his shoulder in agony.

"Merlin Potter, what's wrong? Did I feel something hard when I grabbed your shoulder?"

"No, I...er...I just..." Harry searched for an explanation but failed.

"I'm just going to check out your shoulder and see what's going on," Snape said starting to unfasten Harry's cloak.

"No!" Harry was beginning to panic and tried frantically to get up again, but failed once again as his arm gave out. "I'm fine, really."

"Nice try, Potter. I'm going to have to cut your shirt and sweater as I don't think you're able to take it off right now, but I'll repair it when I'm done."

Snape carefully pulled Harry up into a sitting position, but Harry was now stuck there, unable to stand without using his arm, not that Snape even let him try. With Harry physically unable to escape, Snape took out his wand and cut Harry's clothes from the neckline down to his shoulder and then pulled back the flap in the back, revealing the back of his shoulder.

At first Snape couldn't really tell what was going on, only saw a mess of blood. Once he wiped it away with a flick of the wand, he was confused to see a piece of glass now only slightly protruding from Harry's skin. By the bruising and redness, it seemed to have been there for a few days and was getting infected.

"Potter, what the..." Snape's words trailed off as he noticed the start of a deep cut leading under the rest of his shirt. He began to cut away more of the shirt, but Harry wrenched himself away, scooting backwards from Snape. Harry tried to think of some excuse or something to say but his words failed him. He wanted to just get up and run, but he was aching so much that he couldn't even get up.

"I'm taking you to the hospital wing," Snape said.

"No. It's nothing. I was already at the hospital wing yesterday. I'm not going back. Besides, she would just tell Dumbledore and Professor

McGonagall and get a bunch of people involved and that would be stupid 'cause it's nothing," Harry rambled desperately.

"There's a significantly sized piece of glass protruding from your shoulder. You call that nothing?"

"Yes, it's nothing I can't handle myself," he said stubbornly.

"Then why haven't you?" he asked with a raised eyebrow. Harry couldn't think of a response.

"Fine, I'll heal you myself then."

Harry looked horrified. "You? No way!"

"Listen, Potter, here's the deal. Either I'll have to bring you to Madam Pomfrey or you can let me have a look at it and try to heal it myself. I am very competent with magical medicine, especially as much of it ties into potion making. Madam Pomfrey is a much better healer than myself, but it is true that she'll probably inform the headmaster and your head of house if it is something serious, which it looks like it is. So what do you want?"

Snape watched Harry as a defeated look washed over his face. Staring at the floor he said in a voice not much louder than a whisper, "Well, do you promise not to tell anyone?"

Snape paused thoughtfully. "Yes, unless it's imperative that I do otherwise."

Harry sighed and softly nodded his head, still staring sadly at the floor. He began to uncomfortably scoot back towards Snape, who met him halfway, and slowly spun around so his back was once again facing Snape.

Rather than having his Potions professor surgically remove his clothes, Harry carefully removed his shirt and sweater together, wincing as he heard the sharp intake of breath from behind him.

"Merlin, Potter, what happened?" Snape asked horrified, eyes fixed on the battlefield on Harry's back. There were deep gashes everywhere and many glass shards of varying sizes still embedded into his skin. On closer inspection through suspicion, Snape found cuts all over the back of Harry's head as well.

"I...er...fell backwards into a glass table."

"Which somehow also caused a bruise on your cheek?" Snape sounded genuinely perplexed. The boy's story made sense except for the gash and bruise on his cheek. It also seemed that it would take more force than just tripping to do so much damage.

A thought flashed across his mind but he quickly waved it away as impossible. This was The-Boy-Who-Lived, the one with the perfect life with everyone admiring him for doing something accidentally when he was one year old. That surely would include his family. He couldn't shake this suspicion though, no matter how ridiculous it may have seemed.

Noticing Harry hugging his knees to his chest, Snape began to suspect that there was something strange with this, especially since the arm that had been hurting him so badly was now wrapped around his legs, grasped by the other one to support it. Snape stood and walked around to Harry's front.

"Harry, let me see your stomach."

Harry looked up at him. "You said you only wanted to look at my back."

"And now I want to see your stomach. Now!" he added menacingly. Harry reluctantly removed his legs to reveal an extremely bruised torso. Snape's eyes flashed with anger and Harry instinctively flinched.

"Who did this to you?" he asked forcefully. Harry looked away and started mumbling something with many "It's nothing"s and "I'm fine"s. For the first time in his life, Snape began to feel actual sympathy for the boy. Maybe his life wasn't great in every aspect after all. He

sighed and kneeled down next to Harry and gently took his chin into his hand and forced him to make eye contact, at which point Harry stopped mumbling.

"Pott...Harry. Who do you live with? Your uncle and aunt, right? Your uncle did this to you, didn't he? No, Harry, look me in the eye and tell me the truth. It's the only way I can help you."

Harry looked up into Snape's eyes for a brief moment. Snape saw many emotions in those eyes: guilt, sadness, embarrassment. Then looking back downwards, Harry gave the slightest nod, which Snape might not have even noticed if he hadn't been lightly holding Harry's chin. He began to shake slightly and pulled his knees back up to his chest, this time for comfort rather than concealment.

Snape shut his eyes and massaged the bridge of his nose. He couldn't believe what was happening and wouldn't have believed it if he didn't know in his heart that it was true.

"All right, I'm going to help you stand up and we'll go into my office. No one will disturb us in there and we'll try and heal you up." He didn't know exactly how to help Harry up without hurting him and settled on mainly pulling up his better arm. Harry followed Snape into his office and sat down on the couch inside while Snape looked through his potions, finally settling on one.

"Hmm...well the only way I can really figure how to get that stuff out of your back is through this potion," he said giving the bottle a shake. "See, you've left those pieces of glass in long enough to start forming scabs around them, which is going to make it very difficult and very painful to remove. This will un-clot your blood around your wounds so the shards of glass will be easier to remove and will, in effect, hopefully be less painful. It will also reduce scarring and as you already have one famous scar, I don't think you need any more. Unfortunately, it doesn't mix well with pain-relieving potions and therefore I'm afraid you'll just have to grin and bear it until the glass is out. That is unless you have a better idea."

"No, sir. I already tried Accio and that didn't work too well, so this seems as good a shot as any."

"You tried to summon the glass from your back?" Snape asked shocked while measuring some of the potion into a glass. "Well that had to hurt."

"Yeah, it wasn't exactly a comfortable feeling."

Snape handed him the glass that Harry promptly drank down trying to ignore the unpleasant taste. The wounds on his back began to lose any numbness still present and he once again remembered the pain he felt that first night. He began to feel blood dripping down his back. Snape sat down next to him with tweezers and a beaker. Harry positioned himself so his back was facing the professor.

Snape looked worriedly at his student. The sooner this was over the better, the boy seemed to be losing a lot of blood as even the cuts without glass in them had opened back up. 'Here goes,' he thought to himself and picked a random piece of glass to begin with.

"All right, I'm going to start now. This will hurt."

Harry nodded his head and took a deep breath. Snape latched the tweezers onto the protruding bit and pulled fast, hoping to get it over with soon. Harry let out a cry of pain and slapped a hand over his mouth to muffle it. Snape could see his whole body tense and wasn't surprised, as the piece of glass had been much bigger than he had expected. He dropped the glass into the beaker and turned back to see that now Harry looked strangely lax.

"Potter?"

"Uh huh?" Harry said turning his head to look at his teacher. Snape could see his eyes were a bit glazed and unfocused and was worried he would pass out.

"Lay down on your stomach before you faint." Snape moved off the couch and got a chair from behind his desk while Harry followed the orders. When they were situated again he said, "All right, Potter, you need to stay conscious so you need to stay talking." Snape pulled out a smaller piece of glass with a sharp intake of breath from Harry.

"Talk? About what?" he said once regaining his breath.

"I don't know, what do you talk to your friends about?"

"Do you really think that's a good idea?" Harry asked sarcastically.

Snape agreed with Harry. There would be nothing that he'd like to listen to less than Potter's conversations with his friends.

"All right, why not tell me what happened that you ended up with a table in your back?" He pulled out a slightly larger piece of glass than the last one and Harry had to bite back a cry. "You have to talk Potter or you will pass out and I'll have to take you to Madam Pomfrey."

"Fine. I snuck out the night before I came back and got caught." Snape pulled out another one with a gasp and groan from Harry.

"Well that wasn't too smart then. What were you doing sneaking out in the middle of the night anyways? Giving interviews to the president of your fan club?" he said sneeringly but mentally kicked himself. 'Way to be supportive,' his mind scolded.

"No," Harry said with a glare. "I was visiting someone in the hospital. The Dursleys, the family I live with, are in a sort of feud with them and I wouldn't have been allowed to go but..." Harry let out another cry of pain with another large piece of glass and started biting his lip.

"Keep talking, Potter."

"...but my owl came with a message saying it was urgent so I waited until the Dursleys were asleep, snuck out and ran to the hospital."

Now Snape felt even more stupid for his earlier comment.

"Why are the two families in a feud?" he asked just to keep Harry talking rather than actually being interested.

"Er...that actually would be my fault." Another cry of pain.

"How so?" Snape asked pulling out another piece. He noticed that Harry's fists were both clenched and turning white.

"They...er...found out about this last summer."

Snape stilled. "Wait, how long has this been going on? And I want the honest truth."

"Well, I don't really know exactly." He paused to catch his breath with another piece of glass extracted. "It was always smaller stuff, like slapping and pulling my hair. They supported my cousin and his friends beating me up. Besides a few incidences, things didn't accelerate until last summer. In fact, when I got my Hogwarts letter, things got better for a while, I got a room and aside from trying to starve me after an incident in the summer before my second year, it was pretty good."

He didn't know why he was telling Snape things that he hadn't even told the Stensons or his best friends, but when he was talking, he did feel less likely to pass out and, though he hated to admit it, it felt refreshing to actually tell this to someone.

Snape was starting to get very interested in what his most hated student was saying. He would never have guessed about Harry's home-life and was appalled. "What do you mean by a few incidences before Hogwarts?"

"Er...when I was six, my teacher sent home a progress report saying that I was mixing up my "d"s and my "b"s. My uncle had already been having a bad day and when I was working on getting the letters right, he took my pencil and stabbed it into my forearm. It's actually kind of funny, you can still see the lead in there." Sure enough, when Harry pointed it out, Snape could see a dark spot under his skin. "When I was eight, my aunt hit me in the back of the head with the frying pan hard enough to give me a concussion. They made me walk to the doctor's office with a story about falling off the jungle gym, but he was suspicious which stopped my aunt and uncle from doing anything to me for a while."

"Merlin...and what do you mean about getting a room, where did you sleep before?"

"Er...in the cupboard under the stairs."

"You grew up in a cupboard? That must've been...er...cramped," Snape said unsure of really what to say. He had never dealt with anything like this before.

"Not as much as now." At Snape's questioning glance he explained. "I'm back in there again." There was a pause as Snape pulled out another one, leaving Harry to catch his breath and Snape to try to get over the shock of what he was hearing. By the glazed look in Harry's eyes, he probably wasn't fully aware that he was spilling his life story to his most hated professor, but then again who could blame him?

"All right, we have one more left now, the one in your shoulder. Now, it's in there pretty deep and so it'll probably be pretty painful."

"Oh goody, best for last. Let's get this over with then." Snape latched on the tweezers as Harry took a deep breath and winced in anticipation. Snape yanked as hard as he could, thinking "the faster the better" and pulled out the last piece of glass.

Harry couldn't even breathe as pain shot through his shoulder let alone scream out the anguish he felt inside. The world began to sway and Harry felt like he was going to fall despite the fact that he was already lying down. Everything began to blur and he knew he was going to lose consciousness.

When Harry didn't make any sound, Snape quickly rolled him over onto his side to meet the boy's unfocused eyes that were opening and closing as if he was trying to stay conscious.

"Come on Potter, you just need to stay awake enough to drink the antidote," Snape called to him shaking his shoulders slightly, which seemed to bring him back a little. He sat Harry up and leaned him against the back of the couch while he quickly grabbed the antidote to the un-clotting potion and held it out to Harry. He hoped the boy would be able to drink it on his own as Snape would rather drink a

potion made by Neville Longbottom than to be remembered as feeding Harry Potter. Luckily, Harry weakly took the cup and shakily drank down the potion.

As the potion went down his throat, Harry could feel the pain ebbing away along with the dizziness and blurriness. He figured the potions master must have mixed in a pain-relieving potion with the antidote.

"All right, the bleeding will slow down now, but I'm afraid you're going to have to let those cuts heal the slow way. I'm going to probably have to use magic on your front and no one's body can take too much magic." Harry nodded weakly. This whole ordeal was taking a lot out of him.

"So what's wrong with your chest? Is it just bruised? It seems too dark to just be bruised though."

"Er, I think some of my ribs might be broken."

"Oh? How's that?"

"Well, they got stepped on and I heard some cracks," he said looking away with a tired expression. Snape almost found it humorous how Harry made it sound like someone was just walking down the street and his body just happened to get in the way. Who was he trying to kid? Snape sighed.

"All right, well, that's easier then. They actually have specific spells for broken bones. Of course, ribs are more difficult than some, but here we go anyway." Snape pulled out his wand and with a wave muttered, "Skelasis Heolin."

With that Harry was better able to breathe than he had in days. He took a deep breath just to enjoy the absence of stabbing pains in his chest. Snape also shot a general healing spell at Harry's stomach that cleared up much of the bruising. "All right, Potter, is there anything else wrong? And I suggest you tell me the truth."

"No sir, that's all," Harry said, pulling his now fixed shirt back on.

"Well the minor injuries will have to heal on their own, but I'll give you a vial of pain-relieving potion, but don't take it more than three times a day. One sip at a time should suffice."

Finally Harry was again fully dressed and with the vial of potion, walked out of the office followed by Snape. At the door of the classroom, he turned around and looked into his professor's eyes. It was a reluctant gaze but Harry felt it was necessary. "Thank you, Professor," Harry said with sincerity and then turned to walk out the door.

"Wait, Potter," Snape called. "What are you going to do about this?"

Harry just looked at him confusedly and then turned little panicky. "You're not going to tell anyone, right?"

"I promised I wouldn't but you need to. It's just going to get worse."

"I'll think about it, sir," Harry said without any intention of doing so and left the classroom, closing the door behind him.

A/N: Just a quick note about the lead thing in Harry's arm. That actually happened to my brother! When he was about 9, this girl who probably fancied him stabbed him in the back with a pencil in the middle of class! Now he has a dark spot there and you can see the lead still under there. It's really strange, but he says it doesn't hurt or anything when you press on it.

Also, just F.Y.I. this isn't going to end up as a Snape wants to be Harry's father type fic, even though I think most of those are absolutely brilliant. He's not going to become Harry's confidant or become a saint or anything, he's just seeing that there might be another side to his least favorite student, and as any human being would, is worried about a kid in such a horrible home environment.

Disclaimer: I don't own anything that you recognize from the Harry Potter books.

Author's Note: Thank you for all the wonderful reviews. Thanks especially to Firemask, Eowyn of Ithilien, ckat44, GrimmyD and Maximum Poofy-Queen of AU for their continuous and enthusiastic reviews. It's for people like you who keep this story going! Well let the story continue!

The next morning, Harry awoke for the first time in days feeling good. His injuries were almost all gone, his fever had gone down, his stomach no longer hurt. As he remembered the reason behind his newfound health, however, he mentally kicked himself. The whole episode was kind of blurry from the time of the first piece of glass coming out and the healing potion. He must've been only half-conscious. He did remember spilling his secret out to Snape, and in much more detail than he had ever intended to tell anyone, especially not the greasy-haired potion's master. He just hoped that Snape stayed true to his word and didn't tell anyone.

A few weeks later found Ron and Harry trudging miserably up the tower stairs to Divination. Harry now especially hated the class since whenever Professor Trelawney predicted his death, he couldn't help but realize that this time, she was finally right.

He therefore spent most of the class trying to block out her droning voice. They were learning how to palm read. After what seemed like an eternity of lecture, she finally let the students break off into pairs to practice their new lesson. Harry admitted to Ron that he had been spacing out while the lesson had been going on so Ron decided to go first in reading Harry's palm. He propped his book open on the desk next to him for reference.

"All right, er...this is your life line, I think," Ron said with a frown of concentration. He looked at the book and tried to match up the lines it was talking of to the lines on Harry's hand. "It curves so that means that your life is er...." He looked at Harry and shrugged. "...wavy? Well, anyways, I can't tell which of these two lines are which so you're

either going to be popular and others will dislike you, or you'll have no friends but people will love you? Well that'll be interesting to see you pull that one off." Ron laughed turning Harry's hand from side to side as if waiting for the lines to suddenly all make sense.

"Well, either way, at least I'll have a wavy life," teased Harry. Unfortunately, Professor Trelawney must've overheard them talking and came over.

"Let me show you all how it's properly done. I'll use Mr. Potter as an example. Mr. Potter, no need to be dramatic, please scoot your chair back over here."

Harry reluctantly followed her orders. Professor Trelawney sat down facing Harry and grabbed his hand, staring intently at the palm for what seemed like hours. Just when people started whispering suspicions that she might have fallen asleep or something, she started tutting and sadly shaking her head.

"Oh dear, boy, you have the shortest life line I've ever seen. I fear you will not survive the year."

"Isn't the life line supposed to show your attitude toward life and the quality of your life rather than the length?" Harry asked, annoyed. It was the truth though. At least that was what their textbook had said.

Professor Trelawney frowned. "Lines have multiple meanings," she snapped. Then she calmed herself and continued in her mystical voice. "This jaggedness implies a long, painful death."

Parvati and Lavender gasped, shooting sympathetic looks at Harry.

Harry's blood began to boil.

"Wasn't I already supposed to die about twice already? Maybe you should quit expressing your death wishes for me before somebody starts wondering why your predictions never come true."

Professor Trelawney looked surprised, along with the rest of the class. Even Harry himself was a little taken aback by what he had just said,

but the comment had rubbed him the wrong way and he was by no means sorry.

"The gift of the inner eye is a very delicate thing. I don't expect people without any talent in Divination, such as yourself, to understand its complexities," she huffed indignantly.

"Well I think your inner eye needs some glasses," he retorted. Professor Trelawney seemed to be at a loss for words, but suddenly, a look of understanding melted across her face. Harry was shocked. Was she actually beginning to realize that her harsh predictions might hurt people?

"Oh dear, I see it now. You're in denial. The anger you're feeling is totally natural. You've seen it too, haven't you? Listen dear, why don't you take the rest of the class off to go think about what you'll do with the remainder of your time among the living. Go on now, shoo."

Harry was still angry and glad for the opportunity to leave. He grabbed his bag and stormed out of the classroom, reminding himself a bit of Hermione in their third year.

He went to the dorm and threw down his books in frustration. He knew he shouldn't have reacted to Professor Trelawney like that. It would raise a lot of eyebrows. He began pacing around the room, trying to walk off his anger and sort his thoughts. All of a sudden, he felt really dizzy, his head beginning to throb. With a start, he realized this was a sign of the cancer. He flopped down onto his bed and stared at the ceiling.

"I'm going to die," his mind said in a depressed state of shock. For some reason, it never truly hit him before. Next year he wouldn't be able to get so frustrated with his professors. He wouldn't ever get to see his two best friends bicker with each other.

This last thought brought up another issue: when was he going to tell Ron and Hermione? He couldn't keep it from them forever, but he didn't want them to treat him any differently. Yet he knew that if he were in his friends' shoes, he'd want to know. But how to tell them?

Harry suddenly burst into a coughing fit, covering his mouth with his hand out of habit. When he stopped and could breathe normally again, he glanced at his hand to investigate why it felt warm and wet. He was horrified to see blood on it. He ran to the bathroom and washed it off, rinsing out his mouth as well.

"I'm dying." The thought crept into his head. It no longer felt like something of the distant future. It was starting now. "I'm fifteen years old and I'm dying."

He walked back into the dorm and sat down dejectedly on his bed, staring blankly into space. He was broken from his daze by the sound of other students entering the common room below. Harry took a few long deep breaths to calm himself and started downstairs to seek out his two best friends.

Luckily, nobody seemed to question his slight break down in Divination. Everyone constantly witnessed the spaced-out professor telling Harry he was going to die. They all agreed, spoken or not, that Harry was under enough stress as it is with Voldemort after him without a teacher constantly preaching about his demise.

Ron simply asked if he was okay (in reference to Divination), and when Harry replied positively, Ron went on a rant for twenty minutes about why Professor Trelawney should be fired and, as a general rule, kept away from any small, impressionable children.

He eventually changed the subject to the reasons why the same applied for Snape, only stopping as they approached the dungeons for Potions.

Harry was apprehensive for the class, as he had been for the last few ever since the night that Snape healed Harry's injuries. His first lesson after that night was the first time he had actually hoped that Snape would treat him the same as he always did. If Snape had looked worried or acted even slightly nice, people would definitely be suspicious (after they had gotten over the shock of course).

But Snape had acted as he normally did, much to Harry's relief. He now just hoped it would stay like that. Maybe he had even forgotten about the whole situation.

The two walked into the dungeon, taking their usual seats, Harry doing his best not to squirm with nervousness. As usual, Snape burst into the room with his robes billowing behind him and with a scowl on his face, looking like an overgrown bat. To Harry's relief, he took no side glances at his student and just jumped into his lecture which, as usual, went along the outline of:

1. Gryffindor insults
2. Actual instruction
3. "Why all students are complete morons" lecture
4. More actual instruction
5. Neville and Harry bashing
6. Orders to get cauldrons and ingredients out
7. Continuation of Gryffindor and Neville insults, with an occasional bark at Harry at any slight movement or noise

As the class went on as usual, Harry was joyfully surprised that he actually understood the lesson for once. He even figured out that Snape had left out some instructions on how to add the ingredients and warned the people around him while Snape had his back turned. Harry smiled when the Slytherin's potions began to explode or turn a sickly green instead of the purple it should be, while the Gryffindor's potions were turning out correctly. Snape was very suspicious as to why half of his students were actually able to do the lesson. Luckily, he asked the one person who knew the reason.

"Mr. Potter, can you explain to the class how your potion became purple? An explanation without any help from Miss Granger or a textbook, that is," he sneered. Harry smirked back.

"Sure Professor. I just followed the instructions you gave us, but made sure to crush the asp tongue since asp tongue cannot work in most potions without being in a powder form. I also made sure to let the bay leaf totally dissolve before adding the asphodel, since, of course, asphodel reacts explosively with bay leaf unless the bay leaf is first mixed with thiamin long enough to lose its acidity," Harry stated as if it was an obvious fact. He shot a meaningful glance at the Slytherins that clearly gave the message that any idiot would know this information. Snape seemed utterly stumped.

"And how did you know this?" Snape asked spitefully, obviously hoping to somehow accuse the Gryffindors of cheating. Harry thought quickly.

"Well Neville convinced us all to study a little more for your class and we all got together for a Potions study session." Neville looked taken aback at first, but quickly recovered when Snape looked at him, transforming his expression into one that made it seem as if Harry were speaking the absolute truth and that it was no surprise.

Snape looked around the Gryffindors who were all nodding in consent to what Harry had said. Harry could see an internal battle flickering inside the Potion's master.

"Well then, five points to Gryffindor for the extra effort," he said in a strained voice. He stalked off to record this, looking appalled at himself. The rest of the room was frozen with their mouths hanging open. This was the first time Harry had ever seen Snape give Gryffindor points.

"Well, get back to work or I'll take away ten points from each of you!" Everyone finished up their potions and put them into corked vials, placing them on the storage shelf.

Finally, class was over and everyone made for the door.

"Mr. Potter, stay after class," Snape stated firmly, not looking up from the papers he was grading. With the natural way Snape had been treating him, Harry figured it was about doing the potion correctly, nearly forgetting about his initial fears.

Once the last person was out the door, Snape finally looked up.

"How are your injuries?" he asked, sounding very unsure of how to phrase this question. Harry was only momentarily surprised.

"Er...fine sir. They don't hurt at all," he said, looking at the desk.

"And have you told anyone yet?"

"Er...not exactly sir."

Snape heaved a sigh. "I take it you're not planning to."

Harry didn't say anything. Snape rubbed the bridge of his nose. He wasn't sure why this had been plaguing his mind for the last few weeks. He just wanted his student to tell someone else, to transfer the problem onto someone else's shoulders. It was too much of a burden being the only one with such dangerous knowledge.

"Potter, you need to tell someone. Otherwise, what will you do come summer?"

Harry actually didn't know the answer to this question. It was true that he didn't want to spend his last few months of his life around people who hated him, but he just couldn't tell anyone.

"I-I just can't," he murmured.

"Why not?" Snape asked exasperated. "I assure you that the headmaster won't go selling the story to Rita Skeeter. He'd be able to help you."

Harry just picked up his things and started toward the door. He grabbed the doorknob and paused. He kept his eyes down.

"I just couldn't let him down like that," he said barely above a whisper, and then left without looking back.

Snape simply stared at the door closing behind the student he had loathed for the past four and a half years.

'How did I get myself into this?' he asked himself with a heavy sigh.

* * * * *

A/N: Hmm...why is Harry all of a sudden understanding Potions? I bet you all can guess!! Trust me though, this is the tip of the iceberg for Harry's powers. What am I telling you guys for, you'll just have to stick with my fic! Please review. It means so much to me when I get them. So take a few seconds and make me happy!

Disclaimer: This is the final disclaimer. It applies to the entire story. I'm sick of writing them. I don't own Harry Potter and all that jazz.

Author's Note: First order of business: everyone who likes a fantastic story with much angst should read Enahma's two fics that you can find in my favorites list. She's just finishing up her sequel and I'm so excited!! Everyone should read!!

Now about this story: Here's the chapter you've all been waiting for... maybe!! Also, for the first time ever, because of the wonderfully thoughtful and enthusiastic reviews, I'm including review responses at the end of the chapter, just because you guys make me oh so very happy!! You can also email me at any time with questions or comments if you don't want them showing up on the site, or if you want me to respond to you before I post. Thanks again to my wonderful reviewers!! If you don't want to read the responses at the end of the chapter, when you hit the row of stars, just scroll right on down to the review button! On with the story!!

* * * * *

Harry walked into the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom, explaining to Lupin that he had been kept after in Snape's class. The professor nodded in understanding. The Gryffindors must have been discussing the events in Potions.

They were all beaming at him, especially Neville.

"As I was saying," Professor Lupin said cheerfully, "today we will practice deflecting and dodging curses. If you can do this, then try to disable your partner. These skills are used by Aurors all the time and are necessary if that's what you plan to do for your career. They're useful even if you're not planning on being in Magical Law Enforcement, especially in light of recent times. So, everyone pair off. We'll take the winners of each pair and pair them up. The winners will continue dueling until one is left who will then duel with me. So go ahead and grab a partner!"

Everyone was pretty excited about this exercise, especially with the absence of the competitive rivalries that had existed in the dueling

club in their second year. Neville grabbed Harry for a partner while Ron and Hermione paired off together. He thanked Harry profusely for earning him some points with Snape. Harry secretly doubted that it had made that much of a difference in their potion master's attitude towards the clumsy boy, but decided not to bring down Neville's high spirits.

Once things got settled and Lupin gave the signal, everyone bowed.

"All right, begin!"

Harry let Neville have the first shot. Neville threw the leg-locker curse. Harry easily deflected it and simply sent it back at Neville, almost like a mirror. Harry didn't even know he could do that! Neville lost his balance and Harry quickly disarmed him. He sat laughing on the floor while Harry undid the curse and helped him to his feet.

"Well that was quite embarrassing," he said with a smile. He had been the first one in the class to lose.

They watched everyone else finish dueling. Hermione and Ron went on the longest, but finally ended when they both shouted "Petrificus Totalus" at the same time, not blocking the other fast enough. It ended with them both lying on the floor unable to move. Professor Lupin quickly undid them claiming it was a draw and that neither would go on. It seemed for a second that they were both going to be put in bad moods because of it, but luckily, they both laughed it off. Harry was thankful for the way it ended since it didn't include in any hurt feelings.

Harry next dueled with Seamus, who he stunned and disarmed just as quickly as Neville, even with letting Seamus have the first shot. He went through Lavender and a couple of Hufflepuffs just as quickly and easily. He was surprised to see he was the only one left.

"Well, Mr. Potter, I must say, you have dueled very well. I'm surprised at the speed you were able to win each time. Well now you're against me. I'm going to use some more advanced spells and curses so it's going to be much more difficult. Just want to work on blocking as many as you can, all right? Miss Granger, may you give the signal?"

They both bowed and took their stances.

"All right," Hermione said excitedly. "Begin!"

Immediately Professor Lupin began shooting curses that Harry was unfamiliar with. It was strange though, it was almost as if the curses were moving in slow motion. It was like he could sense what Professor Lupin was going to do.

Harry easily dodged, blocked, or deflected each one of them easily. He could sense his professor's surprise, but Harry continued to resist the curses. Lupin became more determined and shot the curses faster, but it didn't affect Harry's ability to block them.

Finally, Harry sensed Lupin pause to prepare for the next curse. Harry quickly shouted "Expelliarmus!" Lupin's wand shot from his hand and landed in Harry's. The whole class, including the professor, stood there in shock. Harry began to feel a bit uncomfortable. He had never been that good at dueling. It had felt almost like his powers had increased during the duel, allowing him to fight easily.

"Harry," Professor Lupin said, still staring in disbelief. "That was amazing. How were you able to block all of those?"

"I'm not sure, I just did," he said sheepishly, hoping his face wasn't turning red. "Er...here's your wand back, sir." He handed back Lupin's wand.

"Well class, let's have a hand for our dueling champion." The class broke into applause, many people beginning to get over their shock. "Ten, no fifteen points to Gryffindor. Keep up the good work Harry."

The class was dismissed and Harry walked out with Ron and Hermione.

"Merlin, Harry, that was spectacular! I mean you beat a professor!" Hermione began ranting animatedly.

"Yeah, mate, you're on a roll today. First you're a genius in Potions, and now the first one they'll recruit as an Auror! It's almost like your magic has increased for the day," Ron raved.

It hit Harry. Of course, it made sense. He knew that cancer would affect his powers; he had just assumed it would be in a negative way. He was filled with mixed emotions: happy that the cancer hadn't stripped him of his magical ability, yet also dejected now that the illness was obviously beginning to physically affect him.

At dinner, the 5th year Gryffindors were telling the whole table about Harry's dueling in Defense along with giving Neville credit for his knowledge in Potions.

"Guys, it wasn't a big deal," Harry insisted. "You're making it seem like I'm all powerful or something. I just had a good day in Defense, that's all." He reached for the salt but didn't have to reach very far. The salt shaker flew off the table and into his hand.

Harry's mouth dropped open. He looked around. Nobody had noticed except for Hermione and Ron who had equal looks of wonder on their faces.

"Harry," Hermione whispered, "try that again." She took the salt shaker and placed it next to her. Harry made sure nobody was watching and stuck out his hand. Nothing happened.

"Think about making it come to you," she whispered.

He followed her instructions. It didn't even take a lot of mental concentration for the salt shaker to slide across the table into his hand.

"Bloody hell," Ron whispered in shock.

"You can do wandless magic!" Hermione said quietly.

"Huh? No I can't," Harry said in disbelief.

"You just did, mate. You obviously can," Ron said grinning.

"Try doing something else," Hermione whispered eagerly.

Harry looked at Hermione's plate and imagined it spinning. Their grins all grew as Hermione's plate started spinning in place.

"Bloody hell," Ron whispered again, his gaze entranced by Hermione's plate.

Suddenly, his plate started spinning to.

"Two at once," Harry said quietly with a grin.

"Harry?" a voice to Harry's side asked. Harry looked up immediately as if he had been caught doing something wrong. It was Neville. "Will you tutor me in Potions please?"

After much begging, Harry agreed to tutor Neville in potions along with Eloise Midgeon who had come over from Hufflepuff to ask him. Apparently, they had heard the daily gossip as well. She seemed quite shy but she explained that she was desperate for help in Potions. Though the thought of doing more Potions work than necessary was unsettling, Harry couldn't say no.

Harry finished his meal quickly. Hermione and Ron followed him from the Great Hall, being done with their own meals.

"Harry, I can't believe you can do wandless magic!" Ron said happily as they walked along the empty corridors.

"Neither can I," Harry said, but even as he said it, he realized that the cause of his new powers was slowly killing him.

"You'll have to practice and then, you'll be an unbeatable dueler!" Hermione said excitedly.

"Hey, mate, do you think you could train me up a bit in dueling. I want to increase my chances of becoming an Auror in case that's what I end up wanting to do after Hogwarts. If I could duel like you then I'd be a shoe-in!" Ron asked eagerly.

"So you've decided to become an Auror for a living, Ron?" Hermione asked, genuinely interested.

"Well, maybe," he said sheepishly, "I don't want to end up like Percy, and the Aurors aren't really controlled all that much by Fudge, which is good since he's a total imbecile. I mean, I probably won't be able to do anything, it was just a thought."

"Well I think it's a great idea. You'll definitely be able to do that if you really want," she said with a grin. Harry noticed that she refrained from mentioning schoolwork with much difficulty. Harry was proud.

Ron looked at Hermione smiling. A blush was growing on both of their cheeks.

Finally Ron broke the tension.

"Er, thanks, 'Mione. What about you? What do you want to do after Hogwarts?"

"Well, an Auror might be a fun job, but I've never been all that good at dueling, so who knows. Maybe I could become a professor here at some point."

"Yeah! You'd be a great teacher. If there's no openings, you could take over Professor Trelawney's job! I know you're not into Divination, but anyone could teach it better than that old bat and she really needs to be fired." Hermione didn't even bother to scold Ron about bad-mouthing a teacher. By this point, the trio was entering the common room, which was surprisingly empty. Harry guessed everyone was still at dinner.

"So Harry, what about you? You'd make a great Auror!" Ron said.

"I'm not going to be an Auror," Harry murmured. He knew he would never get the chance to be an Auror. He looked around the empty common room and knew that it was time to tell them.

"Oooh you could teach Defense!" Hermione said enthusiastically. You'd be great at that.

"I'm not going to be a teacher."

"Well then, Harry, what ARE you going to do after graduating from Hogwarts?" Ron asked.

"I'm not going to be graduating from Hogwarts."

Ron and Hermione both stopped and looked at each other.

"What are you talking about Harry? It's not like Snape can fail you when you're doing so well in the class now," Hermione asked confused.

Harry looked seriously at his friends. This was going to be difficult.

"I think you guys should sit down. I have something really important that I need to tell you."

Hermione and Ron both looked extremely worried now, but followed Harry's advice and sat down on the couch. Harry at first remained standing, but a dizzy spell forced him to sit down. It seemed that stress brought his symptoms out more. He tried to start several times, but he just didn't know how to put it.

"Harry, you're not leaving Hogwarts, are you?"

"In a way, just let me tell you guys this. I don't know how to even begin. I guess the beginning. You remember I told you about the Stensons? Well, toward the end of the summer Mr. Stenson was diagnosed with cancer."

"What's cancer?" Ron interrupted.

"It's a Muggle disease. Many types are fatal," Hermione answered quickly, motioning for Harry to continue.

I thought there would be a wizarding cure, but as it turns out wizards don't get cancer and most don't even know what it is, as you can see." He motioned to Ron.

"Is that why you were doing all that medical research?" Hermione asked. Harry nodded. "Harry, I'm so sorry, but I'm still confused. I don't see why this would prevent you from graduating."

"Well you have to let me finish. I did find something. It was a spell to transfer the cancer from one person to another. It can only be performed once on each case of it." He paused. "It was the hardest decision of my life, but I just couldn't watch him die."

Hermione and Ron stared at him.

"Wait, what are you saying Harry?" Ron demanded.

"I-I performed the spell over Christmas break," he said weakly, his face begging his friends to understand. There was a pregnant pause. Harry looked down at the floor, but he felt the stare from two pairs of eyes burning into his face.

"Wait, so are you saying you're DYING?" Hermione asked in utter disbelief. Harry nodded feebly.

"Wait, no. NO. Harry, no! You can't!" Ron started yelling. Harry didn't know what to say.

Hermione studied Harry's face. She knew her friend well enough to know he was speaking the truth. She burst into tears and began shaking her head.

"You chose to do this?" Ron asked. His face showed mixed emotions, like Ron didn't know how to feel. He looked angry, shocked, upset, and worried all at the same time.

"I had to Ron."

"You HAD to? How long have you known these people, a few months? You chose to give up your life for some people you hardly know? Did you ever think about your friends?"

"Listen Ron, you don't understand. You would have done the same for anyone in your family, as would I. I never had a proper family, Ron. I only felt I had one with yours or the Stensons, and I would have done the same if it was your dad."

"How long?" he asked after a long pause, not looking at his friend. Harry didn't have to ask what he was talking about.

"I'm not entirely sure, but I think.... about four or five months."

Ron sat down, not saying anything, just staring into space. The common room was silent except for Hermione's sobs.

"Listen, you guys, please don't be mad at me. I- I don't think I could handle it with everything else," Harry pleaded.

Hermione looked up at him through her tears and walked over to the couch he was on. She sat down next to him and threw her arms around his neck.

"I'm not mad at you, Harry. It's just not fair. I can't believe this is happening," she sobbed into his shoulder. Ron looked up at Harry. Harry was slightly shocked to see the anger on Ron's face. He suddenly jumped up and knocked a pile of books off the table, making Hermione jump.

"Harry, it's at times like these when I just hate you," he screamed. "Did you even think of Hermione and me?"

Harry didn't know what to say. Of course he had thought how his friends would react, but he also had realized that his friends could get over him. They didn't need him; they had each other after all. But Mr. Stenson had a family who could never be able to truly get over his death. Harry's family consisted of people who wanted to kill him and would celebrate his death rather than mourn it. Mr. Stenson's life was

surely far more valuable than Harry's; he just didn't know how to explain this to Ron.

Ron seemed to calm down slightly after the long silence. He sank into a chair and put his head in his hands. Finally he looked up at Harry, obviously attempting to remain calm.

"It's just, you always do this! Putting others first without thinking of yourself. You're always just jumping into these situations where you could be killed, or in this case, will definitely be killed. Don't you think? Don't you think about how it affects other people?" He paused and took a deep breath. "Never mind, I guess it's too late for a lecture now. I don't want to be in a fight with you like last year. I'm here for you one-hundred percent, okay?" Ron stopped to compose himself, drawing in a few shaky breaths. "For anything, okay?"

Harry nodded. Hermione broke away from him and wiped away some of her tears. She looked at him right in the eye.

"Ron's right. We're here for you Harry. Best friends through thick and thin."

"Wow, you guys agreeing on something? I must be delusional," said Harry with a weak smile. Hermione looked at him for a second and then burst out laughing and crying, both at the same time. The absurdity of the situation caused Ron and Harry to begin laughing as well, though both were fighting back the prickling of tears themselves.

"You guys are the best friends I could ever have," Harry said after they had calmed down. They both smiled tiredly at him, still unsure about how to react, how to feel.

The rest of the Gryffindors came in, but seeing their three classmates sitting together looking so serious, with red eyes and lost expressions, they all silently agreed to surrender the common room to them for the night and quietly crept up to their respective dorms.

Harry got Ron and Hermione to agree to keep silent about the whole thing under the condition that Harry would report to them when he needed help, and as soon as it got worse, they were going to take

him straight to Madam Pomfrey, tell Dumbledore, and write home to Ron's parents along with telling the twins and Ginny. He figured that this was the best he'd get out of his friends.

They eventually made it back to their dorm rooms after everyone else was asleep. Harry couldn't sleep that night. He felt like his whole life was ensuring that his secrets weren't revealed and he was dragging others into it. Snape was the only one who knew about the abuse, and now Ron and Hermione were the only ones who knew about his cancer. Even those who were under the impression that Harry was entrusting them with his secrets were being kept from knowing something about him.

It was so much work keeping his life concealed from those around him. He was trying to keep them all shut inside and they were slipping out like water trickling out of a dam. He just hoped the dam wouldn't burst under the pressure.

A/N: Well voila! An extra long chapter to balance out my last shorter one. Hope you liked it. I had so much fun writing the wandless magic part. This is all the beginning though. Muahahaha. (Just ate a lot of sugar in case you couldn't tell.) Please Review!!

Firemask: Well, if you want to know how Harry's going to tell Ron and Hermione, look up. LOL. Yeah, Snape's kind of got himself into quite a spot huh? Well, we'll have to see what happens with him. The one thing I'm not sure of about this fic, and I've been debating this for sooo long, is whether Harry should tell the Stensons. I wrote this huge list of pros and cons of a scene like that and I'd probably lean toward the no side, unless everyone really wanted it. I'll probably pose this question a little later on at a certain point and everyone can vote. Thanks for the faithful reviews!!

Eowyn of Ithilien: You are definitely one of my favorite reviewers!! I'm glad random little bits of my chapters makes you laugh and just so you know, I think strange people rock. Especially strange people who

review my story. Thank you for the comment about my characterization of Snape!! It means so much!! As for the dying thing, hmm...I guess we'll just have to wait and see!! Muahahaha!!

Temporary Insanity: Your review rocked. I'm glad to see you've taken such an interest in my fic. Honestly, your review was the reason for this response session. There will definitely be a lot Snape interaction, though it won't dominate the fic. As for the rest, I just want to say, you'll have to see!!! *grins like a maniac and laughs since I know what's going to happen*

Maximum Poofy-Queen of AU: I love your reviews! As I've told everyone else about the issue of "Will Harry Die?" we'll just have to wait and see what's going to happen!! Well, I guess I don't really have to wait since I've already written it, but with the "we'll" have to see, there's a bit of camaraderie, don't you think? LOL.

Jackie: Thanks for all the reviews! Well, I'm sorry he told Ron and Hermione about the cancer first. I agree that sometimes I really don't like either of them in some fics like in

Enahma's Coming off the Ropes. You might really like that since Ron is a royal jack\$\$\$. But as much as I can hate them, I can love them just as much. In this fic, there's a lot that focuses on Ron and Harry's friendship. I hope you'll like it despite that!!

LizhowHP: Thanks for the review!! I'm glad you think it's original!! Keep reading and reviewing!!

Eliza3beth: Well thank you! I updated just like you asked for and as for the rest...we'll have to see...

Ckat44: Soon enough I hope? Thanks for the desperation; it's oddly satisfying! LOL!

Srialb: Oooh how exciting, I almost made someone pee!! LOL. I'm so glad you found it again!! It's great to know you're enjoying it!!

Lizzy Halliwell: LOL I'm glad you are shouting MORE rather than LESS!! Hope you like the chapter.

Fanfictionfanatic: Your review made me laugh. boing? Really? Thanks, I never knew my fic could evoke such a feeling. Or sound. Or whatever it is. LOL

Well folks, that about wraps it up. I hope I covered everyone from last chapter or last few days. Please keep up your wonderful reviews!! I love them so much I think I may print them out and cuddle them.

Author's Note: Hello everyone! Er...new chapter here! I've included reviewer responses at the end once again. Tell me if you guys like this or not because I can easily continue responding or not depending on what you guys want. Remember, this is my version of Harry's fifth year and OotP hasn't happened. (What a great book by the way!) And Sirius will be in this fic and pretty soon too. Thank you to everyone who reviewed. You guys rock!!

* * * * *

The next few days took much adjusting. Hermione and Ron were trying so hard to not act weird around Harry that they were achieving only the opposite. Any slight cough was responded to with worried glances and interrogations into his health. Harry finally gave them a lecture after Ron freaked out when Harry made a comment about needing to sit down. Being that they were in Charms and Professor Flitwick had just told them to take their seats, even Ron had to admit it was a little excessive.

Eventually, however, they got the hang of knowing when to be more worried than usual, which was still too often for Harry's liking, and Harry was able to refrain from snapping at the two when they badgered him about his health.

Harry was finding that he had his good days and his not so good days. Sometimes he could just feel his powers being, well, more powerful. Other days he'd feel tired and lose his appetite, but it was nothing too serious.

After another day of wowing the Defense class, this time with his ability to resist the effects of spells that did hit him, Lupin asked him to stay after class. Harry had always had a knack for Defense, but his increased abilities were now catching everyone's attention.

After class, he waved Hermione and Ron on and approached Lupin's desk. The professor wore a curious expression of excitement mixed with wonder and pride.

"Well, Harry, you have definitely proved yourself to have advanced abilities in Defense. I was impressed with you in your third year and

your abilities and even power has obviously increased greatly since then, and even since the beginning of the year. I talked to some other professors who say you've been doing equally well in their classes, well, at least on some days. Anyway, I spoke with the headmaster and he agreed that it might benefit you to have some extra lessons in Defense to be able to use this power to its full potential," Lupin said with a smile.

"You mean you want to tutor me in Defense?" Harry asked incredulously. "Isn't that a lot of extra work for you?"

"It won't be that much extra work, and whatever it is I'm very willing. Every teacher loves a student who seems to be interested and talented in their subject. It will probably put you ahead of the class, and help you with your O.W.L.s later on, but more importantly, it should prepare you for more important things, since dangerous situations seem to always find you. I'm very eager to do this, but, of course, it's up to you whether you want the extra work or not. I know you're very busy with your other classes and Quidditch practices, but if you're up to squeezing an extra thing into your schedule about once a week, I want you to know that I think you have great potential," he said beaming with pride.

Harry wasn't sure what to do. He thought it sounded kind of interesting, and, being the number one person on the hit list of a madman, it seemed practical to buff up his dueling skills, but there was only one issue.

"Well, Professor, that sounds great, but even I'm not sure why I seem to have a knack for this lately. I seem to have some days where I'm better at it than others and I you've just happened to see me on two of my good days."

"Hmm...well that seems peculiar, but I'd love to train you anyways. What do you say?"

Harry agreed.

That night at dinner, he explained his conversation with Lupin to Ron and Hermione.

“Harry, are you sure that’s a good idea? I mean that’s very physically demanding and I wouldn’t want you to get any worse because of it,” Hermione said.

“Don’t worry, you guys, if I’m ever not feeling up to it, I’ll just tell him I have a ton of homework or something. Besides, I think it might be handy in case Voldemort tries to knock me off prematurely.” Ron flinched at the name, but had given up on trying to make Harry call him “You-Know-Who” a while ago. Hermione bit her lip.

Ron watched in amusement as Harry’s fork floated along the table, stabbed into Hermione’s dinner roll, and floated back to Harry’s hand. He had been stealing food off her plate with wandless magic throughout dinner and she had yet to notice. Now, she only had a scoop of pudding on her plate.

“All right, Harry, but promise me that you won’t do it at any time you don’t feel well.”

“Deal.”

Hermione stabbed at her plate with her fork and it clanged against it. She furrowed her eyebrows as she took in her empty plate. She looked around the table around her as if her food had just jumped off the edge of her plate.

“What in the...” she muttered.

Ron burst out laughing. Hermione looked up at him and then followed his gaze back to her dish where Harry’s spoon was now scooping up some of her pudding. She made a grab for it but it dodged her grasp and floated quickly back to a grinning Harry. She shot him an amused glare as he popped the spoon in his mouth.

“Mmm...this is delicious ‘Mione,” he said through a lopsided grin.

“Boys,” she said in exasperation, “They are blessed with the power of wandless magic and of course, they use it to eat!”

All three laughed as Hermione got herself more food.

Meanwhile, Harry had begun tutoring Neville and Eloise in Potions. They met every few days in the library or the Gryffindor common room. At first, Harry couldn't quite meet Eloise's eyes. Each time he saw the acne on her cheeks, he remembered Ron's comment about not wanting to go out with her based on her looks and felt guilty. After a while, though, Harry realized how nice she really was. Neville and Harry were joking around and made up a "Hated by Snape" club where they were the co-presidents and Eloise was vice president. They all found it quite amusing.

"All right, so if Snape gave you this list of ingredients, and asked you what potion you were making, what would you tell him?" Harry quizzed them. The two studied the list. Neville sighed and sat back in his chair.

"I'd tell him to take that list and shove it up his..."

"Neville!" Eloise scolded. Harry laughed and rolled his eyes.

"And then I'd tell him that it was Campanile Draught," he said proudly. Harry grinned in approval. His two pupils were becoming great at not only recognizing potion names from the ingredients (and vice versa) but could usually figure out how to mix ingredients based on what they did in different forms and how they reacted with other ingredients.

"Good job Neville. Now, what order would you put them in, what would you have to do to the ingredients, and why?"

The two began scribbling notes down on pieces of parchment. After a few minutes Eloise slammed down her quill.

"Done," she stated loud and proud, a little too loud in fact. Mrs. Pince shushed her with a glare.

"All right, let's hear it then," Harry instructed quietly. Eloise explained the procedure and looked up to Harry for confirmation.

“Good, just one step you forgot. What do you say Neville? Do you know what it is?”

Neville took a moment to think and glanced over Eloise’s notes. “She forgot to crush the adder’s scales?” he asked hopefully. Harry nodded and gestured for him to continue into the explanation of why. “...Which would cause it to not mix properly with the Deroga and would make the potion ineffective?”

“Great! You guys will be acing this class in no time, well of course if Snape gets off our backs,” he said gathering his things.

“Right you are, Harry, it’s that last step that’s the killer though. But hey, did you see Snape’s face when I explained to him how I made our last potion? It looked like he had swallowed a Mandrake!” Neville said excitedly. Harry laughed and the three exited the library.

“Ah yes, precious moments in Potions.”

“Well I passed the last test,” Eloise noted proudly. In Snape’s class, this was no simple feat and was almost equivalent to full marks. Harry congratulated her. “Yeah, and I was bragging about it loudly enough in the halls that I think Roger Davies may have overheard. He looked over when I said it! Of course, then I realized he was fixing his hair in the mirror behind me so that could be interpreted as him looking more past me than at me, but I take it as progress.”

“Oh yeah, I can hear the wedding bells now!” Harry teased.

“You just wait, one day when he isn’t distracted by those hiked-up skirts of the seventh-year girls, he’ll come crawling to me,” she said with a dignified tone. “And then he’ll buy me a huge diamond ring and profess his undying love that he’s just been hiding all these years and we’ll buy a house on an island in the Caribbean and live happily ever after.”

“Eloise, you’ve given this way too much thought haven’t you?” Neville asked.

Eloise’s dreamy expression stayed. “Yes Neville, yes I have.”

Professor Lupin told Harry that he would work around his schedule, and to come to him on days he felt like doing it. Harry was briefly wrapped up in Quidditch as they were training extra hard to prepare for a match against Ravenclaw. Angelina was now captain and working them as hard as Oliver ever did, already having led them to a victory against Hufflepuff earlier in the year. After winning the match, practices lightened up for a while, at least until the match against Slytherin drew nearer. On a “good” day, Harry approached Professor Lupin after class and asked if it would be a good day to start. Lupin seemed very excited and told Harry to meet him in the Defense classroom at 7:00.

Later that evening, Harry walked into the room. It looked different now that it was practically empty. All the desks had been pushed against the walls, leaving a large area to duel, much like it had looked when they had done dueling in class.

Harry was surprised to see that not only Lupin was there, but that Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall were also present.

“Hey there, Harry,” Lupin beamed. “I hope you don’t mind but we have two audience members.”

Harry shook his head to indicate that this was fine.

“All right, Harry, I’m going to bump it up a notch from what we did in class. I’d say you should just work on blocking them, but I think you can do more, so I want you to try and disarm me as quickly as you can.”

They bowed and took their positions.

“All right, go!” Lupin shouted, immediately shooting a curse at Harry, who easily blocked it, immediately shooting the leg-locker curse back. This time, however, Lupin was ready and dodged it. He began to shout a whole succession of curses, which Harry either dodged or blocked. Finally, Harry shouted “Expelliarmus!” and disarmed Lupin.

“Well done, Harry,” Dumbledore said looking impressed. “Your professor is an excellent dueler. I’m amazed that you can beat him at all, but especially so quickly and with such apparent ease.”

“It wasn’t all that easy, Professor,” said Harry catching his breath. It had been hard work blocking and dodging all those curses. It wasn’t that it was difficult to be able to do the spells and shields, just the actual energy it took to do it was tiring.

“Well it was easier for you than most fifth year students. Otherwise you’d be disarmed by now.”

Professor McGonagall beamed at him, obviously pleased that it was a Gryffindor who was showing such advanced capabilities.

“If you don’t mind, Harry, I’d like to try dueling you myself,” Professor Dumbledore said.

Harry’s mouth dropped open and the two other professors looked surprised as well.

“Sir? There’s no way I’d stand a chance against you,” Harry protested, but Dumbledore had already exchanged places with Professor Lupin.

“We’ll see. Now, I want you to try your absolute hardest to disarm me Harry.”

Harry dumbly nodded. On cue he bowed and took up the ready stance.

“All right, go!” Lupin said.

As curses shot at him, Harry could feel the immense power radiating from them. He dodged them and blocked them, but it was much more difficult than before. He got hit with one that was supposed to make his legs get too wobbly to stand, but Harry fought the effects and only felt slightly unbalanced. He shouted the Disarming Charm, but the headmaster just sent it back toward Harry who quickly

shielded himself against it. Harry forced himself to concentrate on Dumbledore, trying to sense what he was going to do.

He quickly blocked another curse and, sensing the headmaster pause to say the next curse, Harry shouted “Expelliarmus!” focusing as much power as he could muster into it, knowing that it would take more than normal to disarm the powerful wizard in front of him.

Suddenly, he saw a wand flying towards him and grabbed it, realizing a second later that it belonged to the headmaster. He had won.

The three adults stared at Harry. Harry was feeling very weak and his legs began to give out. Lupin, sensing danger, had gotten up and gone over to Harry, and was able to catch him as he fell.

“Whoa there, Harry, let me help you to a chair.” Somehow Lupin got Harry over to a chair and gave him some chocolate to re-energize him. Even after the chocolate, Harry felt drained of energy.

“I think that’s all I can do for tonight,” he announced.

“Well, I’d certainly say so. I can’t believe what I just saw,” said Professor McGonagall.

“Harry,” Dumbledore said walking over, his eyes twinkling. “You are more powerful than we ever had dreamed. I could feel immense power radiating off of you while you were dueling.” Harry blushed not only at the compliment but also because he knew that there was a reason for it that he was keeping to himself. So many secrets.

“Well, I can’t always do that. I seem to have times where I can do things I can’t at other times.”

“Most curious,” Dumbledore looked at Harry suspiciously. “Harry, do you have any idea what could be causing this?”

Harry looked away. He knew he should tell Dumbledore, but he just couldn’t. He didn’t want the pity. He didn’t want the lecture. He didn’t want to tell him the reason he was so close to the Stensons in

the first place. If he let this one secret out, more would eventually be discovered as well.

“No, sir,” he said, trying to sound convincing, but not quite meeting anyone’s eyes either. He was sure the headmaster knew he was lying, but to Harry’s relief, he didn’t press the matter. Instead, he smiled warmly at Harry.

“Well I’d say you should go get some rest and we’ll have to have more of these sessions.”

Harry nodded and left the teachers to talk among themselves. He trudged back to his dorm and collapsed onto his bed without bothering to change into his pajamas. He was so thankful he had decided to do this on a Friday. He couldn’t fathom starting his homework now. He closed his eyes and was drifting off when he heard the door burst open.

“Hey Harry, you in here? How was it?” Ron asked sitting down on the edge of Harry’s bed. Hermione had followed him in.

“Hermione, should you really be in here? Couldn’t your prefect title be taken away?” Harry asked sitting up in bed.

“How was it Harry? How are you feeling?” she asked ignoring his question.

“I’m fine guys, just tired.”

“Did you beat Professor Lupin again?” Ron asked eagerly. Harry nodded.

“And Dumbledore too.”

“What?! You dueled the headmaster?” Hermione asked in disbelief.

“And won?!” Ron asked enthusiastically.

“Well I’m sure he went easy on me.”

“Oh Merlin how wicked!” Ron exclaimed.

“I don’t know, I kind of feel bad for not telling them why I can do this all of a sudden. It’s like I’m cheating them or something.” Harry yawned. Hermione finally seemed to realize how obviously exhausted Harry was.

“Well, you get some rest, Harry, and we’ll ask you all about it in the morning.” She got up from the bed and started to leave. Ron however, didn’t get the hint quite so easily.

“Wait, how was dueling with Dumbledore? Did he...”

“Come on, Ron,” she said grabbing his arm and pulling him out of the room. It was only about 8:30 so they were probably going to go play wizards chess if Ron could talk Hermione out of studying.

He fell asleep minutes after lying back down. That night Harry had the first dream connected with Voldemort since his revival.

Harry was standing in a large stone room, much like a dungeon. There was a line of Death Eaters in masks. He knew Snape was probably one of them, having guessed that he went back to spying for the light side. They all looked pretty edgy, none daring to speak.

All of a sudden, two large doors burst open. Harry’s scar exploded in pain and he knew who was entering. Sure enough, the same eerie face he had seen come out of the cauldron the year before was now glaring at his followers, who all bowed their heads.

“As you all know, you’ve been ordered to keep a low profile ever since I was returned to you. I know many of you doubted me. You were fools. I had my reasons. Now I’m sure even you imbeciles can see how opposite beliefs regarding my return is tearing at the wizarding community. Many think that old fool Dumbledore is insane.

Now, however, it’s time to have some fun. We’re going to announce my return with a huge event that will cause them all to cower before our feet. We’re going to attack Hogwarts. You will find Harry Potter immediately and bring him to me alive. We’ll use their precious little

hero to teach them all a lesson they'll never forget," he said with a malicious smile.

Harry's mouth dropped open. They were going to attack Hogwarts?

"We'll attack at midnight, when they least expect it. Get ready."

He turned to leave and the Death Eaters all bowed low. The room began to fade away and Harry was falling.

A/N: Well, I really hope you guys liked it. Please review!! You know how happy it makes me!!

Firemask: Yeah, I really don't know about him telling the Stensons. I'll pose the question to everyone soon. Well, it may still be awhile before everyone finds out about the cancer. People may be getting slightly suspicious about Harry's growing abilities, but there's no way any of them would even think of the Recnac Transfaerso spell. It's ancient and they don't even know about Mr. Stenson's cancer and Harry is obviously not ready to tell them yet. Of course now he can even beat Dumbledore in a duel so they've got to be suspecting something. They're just so excited that Harry can do this amazing stuff that they aren't yet concerned of why. (If that makes sense at all.) Thanks for always reviewing and I really hoped you liked the chapter!!

Temporary Insanity: LOL. I'd say your assumption about the later dueling may prove to be accurate. Uh, the cancer is definitely beginning to have its affect. It affects Harry differently since he's a wizard, changing his magic and his ability to learn things about magic more than anything else. Your review made me laugh since you seem to really analyze my story, which I absolutely love. It's really fun. I'd say that the cancer has definitely boosted Harry's power by allowing him to tap into it all. You know how we only use a portion of our brains? Well let's say that wizards and witches only use a portion of their abilities. The better wizards can tap into their full potentials

more easily. The cancer is allowing Harry access to all of his magic. Make sense? If not, just nod and smile. LOL

Eowyn of Ithilien: I'm with you on the hyper scale!! You think beating Lupin was wicked, now he's beaten Dumbledore!! I'm glad you liked Ron's reaction. More Ron and Harry interaction coming up later in my favorite chapter!! You guys really do make me happy!! I hope you like the chapter!!

Catiechan: Thanks! I'm glad you like it. Yeah, I don't think he should tell the Stensons but I'm going to put the question up for debate/vote soon. Don't worry, much overprotective godfatherness in this fic, and soon, just not yet. Keep in mind, he has no idea about the cancer or the Dursleys. Don't worry, he'll be making an appearance shortly. Hope you liked the chappy!

Ckat44: Well, he didn't tell Dumbledore, but Dumbledore was in this one!! Yes he is cool. I like in the OotP when the picture says that Dumbledore's got style. I was laughing so hard b/c I really agree!

Maximum Poofy-Queen of AU: Well, apparently, nobody was paying attention when Harry was goofing around with his wandless magic. More in this chapter. I guess the Gryffindors aren't the most observant people (except for the trio of course who always notice the weird things around the castle). Hoped you liked the chapter.

Phoenix220: Thank you for the review! I really do love each and every one. All right, I'll post more chapters for you, that's a promise!!

Silver-Phoenix: Oooh second fave??? *Grins very brightly* Thank you!! I'm so glad you like it. Just curious, what's your first fave? Anything I'd like??

Melanie: I'm glad you like it!! It will get sadder, but also there are going to be some more happiness too!! I hope you stick with my fic and keep reviewing!! I'm curious what you'll think of some later chapters if you already think it's sad!!

Joe: LOL extra sugar? I'll try to load it on even if I'm not sure what it means. LOL Well, I think you can already see how the cancer is

affecting Harry so far. I'm not sure yet if Harry will tell the Stensons. I'm going to put the question up for debate/vote a little later on with my reasons for both arguments. Then you can tell me what you think.

Thanks also to: fanfictionfanatic, GrimmyD, and Arctic Wolf! Thanks for all the reviews, please keep them coming because I luuuurve them!!

Author's Note: Hey everyone! It's been a while since I last posted, well sort of. I may change the summary slightly just to sort of encourage people to read this story. I think many probably read the first chapter and think "uh oh: Mary-Sue fic, good-bye!" Did you guys think that at the beginning? Honestly? I know I would have. I've really tried to make the Stensons un-Mary-Sue-ish. Oh well. Anyways, if the reviews on this chapter make the number jump to over one-hundred, I'll give you guys an extra-long chapter next time (or 2 shorter chapters at once). Because of Phoenix220 I am going to continue review responses. So yeah!! Review Puhleeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeease! By the way, has anyone ever wondered if you could know someone from ? I mean, for all we know, our favorite authors might actually be our next-door neighbors! Well don't mind my incessant ramblings. On with the story!!

Harry woke with a start gasping for breath. He bolted out of bed and realized that it must still be early because nobody else was in the dorm. He raced down to the common room, thankful now that he hadn't bothered to change into his pajamas earlier. He saw Ron and Hermione talking with a game of Wizard's chess in front of them. He raced over.

"What time is it?!" he asked panicked.

"Um, it's 9:15. Harry, what's wrong?" Hermione asked worriedly.

"Voldemort's going to attack Hogwarts at midnight!" he whispered, not wanting to alarm anyone else. He raced out of the common room at full speed, ignoring shouts for him to come back from others concerned with losing house points. Harry ran the entire way to McGonagall's office, hearing Ron and Hermione somewhere behind him. He didn't bother running to Dumbledore's knowing that he always had problems getting past the gargoyles.

Luckily, the head of the Gryffindor house was still up grading papers. She looked up when Harry burst in the door.

"Mr. Potter, what in the name of Merlin...."

“Professor, I have to see Professor Dumbledore immediately. It’s an emergency! I need to know the password to get in!” he said, gasping for breath.

“What’s going on?”

“Voldemort’s going to attack Hogwarts!” he shouted.

“How do you know...”

“Professor, please! The password!” he begged. There was only about two and a half hours to somehow prepare against an attack. McGonagall looked torn but gave in.

“Lemon Drop.”

Harry nodded in thanks and once again broke out into a run, Hermione and Ron once again falling behind him. He shouted the password as he approached the entrance, sprinting past the gargoyle, which had jumped out of the way, growling at Harry for almost hitting it as he dashed by.

He sprinted up the moving stairs and knocked furiously on the door to Dumbledore’s office.

“Professor!”

The door swung open and Dumbledore looked down at him with a concerned expression. Hermione and Ron were clambering up the steps all out of breath, looking like they had just run a marathon.

“Come in,” the headmaster said standing aside, gesturing for them to enter. Ron and Hermione immediately fell into two chairs, gasping for air, but Harry remained standing.

“Professor, I had another dream. Voldemort was talking to the Death Eaters, telling them that they were going to attack Hogwarts at midnight tonight!”

Dumbledore's eyes lost their twinkle. He suddenly looked very serious.

"Was there anything else?"

"Erm...something about using me as an example to the wizarding world. They were supposed to find me first thing."

Hermione and Ron looked extremely troubled at this. Just then, the door burst open and several professors were following Professor McGonagall in. Dumbledore quickly explained the situation, adding the fact that Snape had been summoned earlier and it was safe to assume that this dream was actually happening when Harry had it.

"What are we going to do, Albus?" Professor McGonagall asked all flustered.

"We're going to get all the students out of here. Heads of houses, gather your students. Tell them only to bring their wands and cloaks. They don't have time to change if they're in their night clothes, they'll just have to go as they are. No student is to be allowed to send an owl; we must make this as secret as possible. Get them to Hogsmeade and load them all on a train towards Beauxbatons, then return immediately. I'll owl Madam Maxine to prepare her. Professor Vector, I'll need you to be in temporary charge of the Slytherins. We'll have Hagrid, Sybil, and Norton go with the students. I'm afraid that's all we can spare. The rest of us will strengthen up the wards. I need to owl some people to help. Go quickly and remember, nobody in Hogsmeade can be informed of this and no student is allowed to get word out."

The professors all turned and left quickly, McGonagall only stopping to tell the three students to follow her.

"Harry," Dumbledore said as they were standing to leave. "I'm sorry, but you cannot go with your friends."

"What? Professor, Harry has to come with us!" Ron cried.

“I’m afraid that’s too dangerous for the rest of the students, but don’t worry, Mr. Weasley, I assure you that your friend will be safe.”

Professor McGonagall ushered Ron and Hermione out. Hermione yelled for Harry to be careful and he yelled the same back, and then they were gone. Harry was ordered to help write a few letters to wizards that might be able to help, including Sirius and Mr. Weasley. He was able to see the flood of students being led out of the castle. He couldn’t see any of their faces from the height, but he could almost sense the nervous excitement and confusion.

‘I never realized how many students we have,’ Harry thought. ‘Too bad they weren’t trained better. If we had all of them fighting with us, we’d win easily. We could just tackle the Death Eaters and pile on top of them.’ Harry smiled slightly at the thought of a bunch of first years sitting on Voldemort.

When he was done with writing letters, he figured he should bring up the fact that he wouldn’t be able to match his earlier performance at the moment.

“Professor, I don’t know if I can duel as well as I did earlier...”

“Harry, I’m not keeping you here.”

“Huh? Then where am I going?”

“We’re sending you home. I’m arranging the Portkey now.”

“You mean, I’m going back to the Dursleys? Why?” Harry asked, quite disgruntled. “There are protection spells for you there. Voldemort is looking for you to kill you if not something worse. If you stayed here, you’d be in danger. If you went with your classmates, it would lure Voldemort there. It will only be for a little bit.”

“But Professor, surely I could help with defending the school. I mean, I have gotten a lot better at dueling and everything; I can surely do something. Please don’t send me back there right now,” Harry pleaded.

“I’m sorry Harry. First of all you’re exhausted from dueling earlier. Second, that would give us one more thing to worry about protecting. Most importantly, though, I can’t put you at that risk.”

Harry was about to further protest when Professor McGonagall came in looking very ruffled.

“All right, Albus, all the students are safely on the train and we’ve made sure that there are no owls on board. We Obliviated a few wizards in the area so no one should know.” Dumbledore nodded.

“Very good, Minerva. I need you to take Mr. Potter back to his relatives’ house to make sure he makes it there safely. Then come back immediately. Harry, you are not to leave that house until a Hogwarts professor comes to get you, is that understood?” he said sternly, looking at Harry over his half-moon spectacles. Harry looked dejectedly downwards.

“Yes, sir.”

“All right, Potter, follow me. We need to be outside the doors of the castle to use the Portkey,” Professor McGonagall said firmly. Harry reluctantly followed her through the castle towards the back doors.

The scene was nothing short of chaotic. There were professors running everywhere and owls flying in and out of windows. There were wizards rushing in, many looking like they had gotten ready in a great hurry. One man had his robes inside out. Harry passed a woman who was still wearing fuzzy purple slippers. Occupied with the commotion, Harry almost collided with someone.

“Harry! Why haven’t you left with the other students?” Mr. Weasley asked. Bill, Charlie, and Percy were standing behind him, nodding hellos.

“It’s too risky for me to be with them right now and they won’t let me stay to help. I have to go to the Dursleys,” he said unhappily.

“Potter, come along, we have to hurry,” said a frustrated Professor McGonagall, motioning for him to come. Harry started jogging toward her.

“Good luck and be careful!” he yelled over his shoulder. He followed Professor McGonagall out the door. He didn’t even have time to muse over his last experience with a Portkey as the end of an old book was thrust into his hand. Immediately, he felt the familiar tug at his navel and closed his eyes.

When everything stopped spinning, Harry opened his eyes to find himself back on Privet Drive. It was about 10:45 now. He hung his head as he followed his teacher down the darkened street to the Dursley’s front door. She knocked firmly and loudly.

‘Uncle Vernon’s not going to like this,’ Harry thought to himself. He heard a muffled voice behind the door and the lock turning.

“What the bloody hell, it’s the middle of the night,” his uncle grumbled throwing open the door. He realized who it was and looked horrified. He quickly looked around to make sure no neighbors were watching.

“What are you doing here?” he hissed.

“Listen, our school is under attack at the moment and Harry will have to stay here until it is safe. It will probably be a few days. When it’s safe, we’ll have a Hogwarts professor come and retrieve him. Well, Harry, I have to go. Remember, don’t leave this property!” she said and Disapparated away.

“Get inside before the neighbors see you in those clothes,” growled Uncle Vernon.

“I’m really sorry, Uncle Vernon, but all the students had to leave the school. It was an emergency.”

“Shut your trap. How disrespectful, waking us in the middle of the night with no warning that we would have to put up with you for a bit.” He grabbed a handful of Harry’s hair and dragged him toward the cupboard under the stairs. Harry was too worn out to protest. “This

will result in a severe punishment, you realize. But I'm not up to it now. Now don't you dare make one peep or you'll be sorry." He threw Harry in and slammed the door. Harry heard the lock click into place.

Harry sighed and lay down on the small bed that he had outgrown. His feet hung over the edge like they always did. He curled up his legs so only his knees were slightly off, which was more comfortable than the other option. It would be midnight in about an hour and a half and he couldn't help but worry about what was going to happen. Nearly half of the Weasley family was going to be fighting, and losing them would be like losing his own family. He shook away the thought.

'They're prepared. The Death Eaters don't know they're prepared so we have the definite advantage,' he thought to reassure himself.

At first he thought that falling asleep sounded impossible, but the earlier dueling had really taken its toll and just before midnight, Harry was asleep and dreaming.

He was back at Hogwarts, standing outside the front doors. The whole castle was silent and dark.

He heard a rustling sound in the bushes. He looked around and saw dark figures creeping around. Harry squinted against the darkness toward the path to Hogsmeade. Somebody was coming up, walking purposely and confidently. A tall cloaked figure. With the throbbing in his scar, he could guess who it was.

As Voldemort got closer, Harry could see he was being followed by a mob of Death Eaters. It was eerie seeing them march up toward the castle in the middle of the night.

As they got closer, the group fanned out, some rushing off to the sides of the castle, no doubt to cover the other entrances as well. The majority, including their leader, stayed on the main path.

Harry moved off to the side, though it was obvious no one could see him.

As Voldemort approached the front door, Harry had to press his head against his forehead to fight the pain. The snake-like man in front of him smiled evilly. He raised his wand to the sky and hissed, "Morsmordre."

A green light erupted from the tip of the wand and shot into the sky. It exploded like a firework but formed a sparkling green skull with a snake protruding from its mouth. The dark mark.

Voldemort shot a spell at the doors and they burst open. Harry followed Voldemort as he marched into the dark front hall, Death Eaters following nervously behind.

"Remember, the Potter boy is mine. The children of those who have proved their loyalty are to remain untouched, unless they resist us. Everyone else can die," Voldemort coldly reminded his followers.

Suddenly, every torch along the wall lit up, illuminating the hall.

Harry laughed in triumph at the shocked faces of Voldemort and his followers. They were practically surrounded by Aurors, professors, and other wizards who had responded to defend Hogwarts, every wand pointing at either Voldemort or the followers that had made it inside. Voldemort found himself facing Dumbledore, who seemed to have authority and power radiating from him.

"None of my students will be dying tonight, Tom," Dumbledore said coldly.

"What? How did you..." Voldemort stuttered furiously. He was trembling with rage. "Avada Kedavra!" he shouted. A green light shot from his wand toward Dumbledore who dodged it and shot a curse at Voldemort with skill of an expert dueler. Harry mentally took notes.

Voldemort shielded himself from Dumbledore's curse. The Death Eaters and the other light wizards began to duel as well. Curses

were being shot all over the place, many passing straight through Harry, giving him chills even though he couldn't really feel them.

He wondered why Dumbledore wasn't trying to kill Voldemort. The Unforgivables (which included the killing curse) were the only spells that couldn't be shielded against and Voldemort was blocking his curses right and left, so the headmaster obviously wasn't using any of the Unforgivables. He remembered Hagrid once saying that Voldemort wasn't human enough to die, so maybe Dumbledore had other plans.

Harry followed Dumbledore and Voldemort as they furiously threw curses at each other. In his dreams connected with Voldemort, Harry always felt as if he were there, but not to this degree. Usually he felt almost like a ghost, being pulled around to see what he would see, with total confidence that no one would be aware of his presence, but this was different. He felt as if he were physically in Hogwarts, except for the fact that curses passed right through him and no one could see or hear him. He also felt the freedom to move around more, going where he wanted rather than being led around like a dog on a leash.

He passed Mr. Weasley fighting a Death Eater. The redheaded man stunned the masked figure and Harry punched the air in victory. He then turned back to watch the more intense battle.

"The students aren't here! Not even the Potter boy!" a masked figure yelled to his master. He must've somehow magically checked the building.

With a cry of fury, Voldemort turned and cast the Cruciatus curse on Mr. Weasley. Seeing that their master was busy, several Death Eaters attacked Dumbledore. He fought them, easily blocking and dodging their curses, but he couldn't get a clear shot at Voldemort.

Harry watched in horror as Mr. Weasley screamed and writhed on the ground. Several people were screaming his name, but everyone was caught up in dueling, unable to help him.

He couldn't stand the screams. This man was practically family to Harry. Harry wished with all his might that Voldemort would stop, that he would let go of his wand or something. Harry shook his head chanting, "Stop it, stop it, stop it," as he watched Mr. Weasley get tortured.

A change was coming over Voldemort's face. His expression had gone from furious to confused. His wand hand seemed to be slowly wrenching away so that the wand was no longer pointing at Mr. Weasley. The curse ended and Mr. Weasley scooted away, shakily trying to catch his breath. He was looking at the strange expression on Voldemort's face as well.

Suddenly, comprehension dawned over the snake-like visage.

"Potter!" he hissed, looking around wildly. Harry's eyes widened in surprise. Everyone near enough to have heard the word looked curiously at Voldemort. The Death Eaters who were fending off Dumbledore were distracted by this and were stunned within seconds.

Voldemort put up a strong shield around himself. His eyes glazed over in concentration. Harry was confused at what he was doing.

Suddenly, Harry's scar erupted in pain. He sank to his knees and screamed in agony. When the pain lifted, everyone around was looking around frantically, many calling his name in confusion. They had heard his screams.

"Aha, so you are here, Potter. Not physically, but somehow, you're here," Voldemort murmured nodding his head slightly. "Well, Dumbledore, I've decided to leave, but I assure you that next time, I will get what I came for." He then grabbed an unconscious Death Eater's arm and pressed his thumb against their mark.

He reached into his robes and grabbed a small pendent, the Death Eaters following his example.

"We'll meet again, Dumbledore," he growled as he disappeared.

Harry woke with a start. It was still night as far as he could tell. In remembering his dream, Harry lied back down grinning, his arms crossed underneath his head. They had won. Voldemort had been completely taken by surprise.

He frowned. But that dream had been definitely different than his others. It was like he was there. It reminded him of visiting Tom Riddle's memory in his second year. And they were able to affect each other through hard concentration. What was that all about? It seemed that when Voldemort had concentrated on him, on their connection, he almost brought Harry there more. Others could hear him!

He knew it must've been another side effect of the cancer. The illness was affecting him differently than he had thought it would. He knew he should feel happy about that, but he couldn't bring himself to work up any joy.

'All this power doesn't even matter,' he thought to himself. 'I'm going to die in a few months anyways, and then it will all be for nothing.'

Eventually, he fell asleep once again, but for the first time that night, he didn't dream.

The next morning Harry awoke to the sound of banging on his cupboard door and the lock clicking open.

He opened the cupboard door to find his irritated aunt coming from the kitchen.

"Here you spoiled brat," she spat thrusting some of Dudley's old clothes into his hands. "Change out of those...things before you make me sick." She walked away muttering about Harry always needing more clothes.

Harry sighed and went back into the bathroom to quickly change. He folded his robes and laid them on his bed. He looked mournfully at his school uniform as he left to start breakfast. It was like turning in his magic, even though he kept his wand hidden in the massive pocket of Dudley's old pants.

'It's only a few days. Probably less. I can do this,' he said to himself.

As much as his aunt and uncle complained about having him around the house, they certainly didn't waste the opportunity. Harry cooked them both breakfast, being denied food of his own. After Uncle Vernon left for work, Harry was given a list of chores to do that included cleaning basically everything in the house and everything having to do with maintaining the yard.

He was hoping the Stensons wouldn't see him. It would be the most painful thing if he had to tell them he couldn't stay with them when he so dearly wanted to.

'Why did Dumbledore have to make me promise to stay at the Dursleys?' Harry mentally whined. He knew the answer of course, but felt the need to blame somebody at the moment. He just kept saying to himself that he only had to make it through a few days before he'd be back to his real home and went on with his chores.

Harry had been walking on eggshells all day. He made dinner for his aunt and uncle, set it out on the table, and went back into his cupboard to stay out of their way. His uncle was pretty late coming home, but all seemed to be going smoothly until he heard the front door crash open and slam shut.

"WHERE IS THAT BOY?" his uncle bellowed. Harry's eyes opened wide. His cupboard door was thrown open and his uncle yanked him out by his arm.

"What did I do?" Harry asked in a panicked voice. He hadn't seen his uncle since that morning and he had left in a fine mood.

"Don't think I don't know your little tricks!" he spat. Harry remained perplexed. He was certain he smelled alcohol on his uncle's breath, but when could he have gone to the bar if he was working all day? "Petunia!" he called. His aunt came out of the kitchen looking slightly concerned for her husband.

"Yes, dear?"

"Don't you think that it's a little too much of a coincidence that the day after this little rat comes here, I lose my job?" Aunt Petunia gasped.

"You made him lose his job?" she screamed at Harry. "How dare you, you little piece of filth! After everything we've done for you!"

"I didn't do anything!" Harry protested. "I don't even know how to do something like that! Your company's been doing badly for a while. I'm sure they just had to let some people go for financial reasons."

"Liar!" Uncle Vernon hissed, punching Harry in the face.

"Uncle Vernon, please, I'm going back to school soon! A professor's going to come and pick me up and they'll see it if I've got bruises all over me!"

"I'm not going to beat you, boy."

Harry sat surprised on the floor looking up at his uncle who had turned and was walking into the kitchen. Harry began thanking any god that was listening.

"I'm going to kill you," he said turning back around with a kitchen knife in his hand. His eyes were filled with drunken rage. He looked out of his mind. Harry jumped up and ran toward the back door. He was just about to grab the knob when his uncle grabbed a handful of his hair and flung him back, right into a wall with a shelf that slammed right into Harry's back. Aunt Petunia screamed as her favorite vase broke.

Harry struggled against his uncle, knowing that this was a fight for his life. He tried to use his wandless magic, but in seeing his uncle's outraged expression, fear overwhelmed him and he froze. He couldn't concentrate enough to use it.

He suddenly remembered his wand, not knowing why he hadn't thought of it before. He reached for it, but Uncle Vernon realized what he was doing and threw a punch at Harry's face. The wand was

forgotten as Harry tried to protect his face with his arms, all the while, kicking at his uncle as the man tried to get the wand himself.

The fact was that he was a skinny, defenseless, fifteen-year-old kid against an outraged man that weighed at least twice as much as him. He was in serious trouble.

Meanwhile, at Hogwarts, people were still trying to repair the damages done in battle. The light side had suffered no casualties, though many were injured (none too severely), and had caught a few Death Eaters who were now awaiting trial.

Unfortunately, parts of the castles were in ruins, including the protection wards around it. Therefore they had spent the entire day with Ministry officials, and anyone else not in the hospital, repairing walls and recasting protection spells, along with adding new ones.

Soon, Snape returned. Voldemort had been furious that they had lost, but there was no way he could pin it on Snape since he hadn't been able to return to Hogwarts to warn Dumbledore. During the fight, Snape had used his earlier training to make it look like he was fighting for Voldemort, but in actuality, either cast blank spells that did nothing or cast spells that helped the light side.

He explained all this to Dumbledore, who summed up all the events at Hogwarts in return.

"So all the students are at Beauxbatons now?" he asked, relieved that they were all safe.

"Yes. Well most of them. I sent Harry Potter home for protection. As you know, he was Voldemort's main target," he said distractedly as he watched some young Aurors trying to repair a wall. Snape stilled.

"Wait, you sent him back to his relatives house?"

"Yes, Severus, until a Hogwarts professor picks him up. You'll have to excuse me, Arabella is waving me over; they probably need help with the wards." He walked away, leaving a concerned Snape.

‘Why me?’ he asked himself, knowing what he had to do. He started jogging out to where the anti-Apparition wards ended.

Harry once again tried to reach into his pocket for his wand, but Uncle Vernon grabbed his arm and threw him to the floor, causing a sickening crack that let Harry know his arm was broken. He tried to scoot away, but was stopped by several kicks to the stomach. The scene was all too familiar in Harry’s mind. He could see Aunt Petunia checking to make sure all the blinds were closed, always concerned about what the neighbors would think.

Harry’s torso felt like it was on fire, but he somehow managed to roll away just as his uncle kicked again, making the grossly overweight man lose his alcohol-impaired balance and crash to the floor. Harry got up and started running toward the front door. If he could only make it to the Stensons!

But Uncle Vernon was filled with too much fury-ridden adrenaline to stay down for long. He soon closed the gap between them. He grabbed Harry’s hair again and slammed his head back into a wall hard enough to make him dizzy and make his vision lose focus. He was thrown to the floor, his huge uncle leaning over him menacingly.

Before he could move out of the way, Uncle Vernon plunged the butcher knife right into Harry’s stomach.

A/N: Uh oh....CLIFFIE!! Hope that wasn’t too psycho-scary movie killer-ish, though that does sort of describe Uncle Vernon in my opinion. I think this is my longest chapter ever!! Only four more reviews and I’ll have 100!!! Yay!! I’m so so excited. The reason this chapter took so long is because I’ve been trying to take in some people’s suggestions and my own new thoughts and adding scenes into the story later on. I’ve been trying to perfect my characters and their behavior, especially a certain escaped convict who we all love. (Well, many of us love anyways.) So Woo Hoo, you know what to do, click the button and review!! Any thoughts, any questions, any suggestions, any ideas, anything at all? Tell me please. It makes my day. Make me happy and I’ll make you happy. (Well, I’ll try my best

anyways.) Also, if you ever don't want me to respond to your review, just put so in it. Now on with the review responses!!!

Phoenix220: Thank you for your advice! I'm keeping review responses going because you said so!! Thank you so much for reviewing. The cancer is affecting Harry in strange ways, obviously. It hasn't had too much of a physical affect yet, but that won't last for too long. The physical affects are going to kind of sneak up on him. Let's just say that Harry's magic is trying to protect him as long as it can against the illness, causing it to be affected first, but the magical protection won't last forever. Basically I just wanted a dramatic scene that isn't that far off which couldn't be pulled off if he had started showing the physical affects really strongly already. J

Firemask: Thank you. I love it when people comment on specific things that I'm doing like characterization and such. Hahaha...Voldie's knickers in a twist. Voldie's knickers.... LOL!!

Maximum Poofy-Queen of AU: If you're a sucker for action, I hope this chappy tickled your fancy a bit. LoL. More action later. More dueling lessons, etc. Oh what am I telling you for. You'll just have to read!! Dumbledore suspects something, but as he's done before (when he suspected Harry knew something about the attacks in CoS) he's just going to leave it up for Harry to tell. That seems to be his method and he's going to stick with it in this fic. Adds to the drama methinks. (Love that word: methinks. Makes me laugh for some odd reason.) Hope you enjoyed the chapter!

Eowyn of Ithilien: I know, Harry's friends were definitely over-reactive in the last chapter. It's just their way of adjusting and dealing with the situation. Harry's got them under better control though. Read my response above to Maximum Poofy-Queen of AU about Dumbledore. LOL about Harry's mouth dropping open in his dream, I didn't mean physically. You know when you dream and you're somewhere and you walk and you talk and you scream cause you realize you're naked? (Or is that just me?) You don't actually do that stuff, your dream self does! (Well, unless you're my sister who sleep walks and talks.) In this chappy, it was more like you described it. We was

more actually there. I don't really know why I did that except for that I thought it would be cool. Evil magic chemo? LOL I am laughing sooo hard. That's just the most entertaining phrase I think I've ever heard. But I guess you'll just have to see what happens.

Temporary Insanity: Malfoy makes a few appearances in this fic but isn't central, though I must say I love one of the scenes that he's in, which won't be for a while yet. I think he's making an appearance soon though. Nothing jaw dropping, just being his usual self and all. I've always thought Harry would make a great teacher, if he ever got the confidence to do it. I guess OotP proved that. Dumbledore didn't want to hurt Harry while dueling. I'd imagine Dumbledore would usually be Apparating all over the place and use some harsher curses, but he's in Hogwarts and dueling a student and he can't do that. In this fic though, especially based on this chapter, I guess you're right, Dumbledore isn't the best dueler in the world, but come on, he's over a hundred, right? He's pretty good though, he just doesn't fight dirty and I think that can sometimes give his opponent the upper hand. (I mean Voldie and crew, not Harry.) Well I'll stop rambling now. Harry is getting powerful and I'd say you're right that he's breaking some shields and stuff. Hmm...good idea. I'll add that to his next dueling lesson. Thanks!!

Allison: Oh you were crying? Yes!!! I mean, oh how sad. I'm glad you're into my fic enough to get emotional. If you're crying already though, you might want to get a box of tissues because there will be some ultra-sad chappies later. Good point. Basically though, it doesn't matter how much searching of the library they do because Harry's been through it all. He's looked for the cure already. He practically devoted his first four months of school to searching through everything. But just for you, I included something about their fruitless research in a later chapter. I'm glad you brought it up because you're definitely right and I'm glad I put that little bit in later. I'm assuming that it would take years of research and devotion to invent a spell, even with Harry's cool new powers, and I don't think he wants to devote his last few months to that. I loved the long review. Thank you so much! Keep up with the comments and criticism. I love it!

Ckat44: Ooh, you're fav? You rock!! That makes me so happy!! I'm glad you liked the dueling last chapter. I'm sorry, but in this fic, Dumbledore isn't going to figure it out or something. He'll find out when some others do. Is that giving too much away? Merlin, I hope not. Anyways, I'm glad you liked the last chapter, hope you like this one as well.

Joe: Hmmm...I guess we'll just have to wait for that. This chapter has a battle, and Harry and Voldie are both there, good enough? Lol. Just joking. The battle you want will be later on.

Maha: Thank you! Keep reading and we'll see just what happens to our Harry. I hope you liked the chapter!!

Teri: Thank you!! Don't worry, Sirius is coming very soon. He doesn't know about all this yet because Harry hasn't told him, nor anyone else who would have told him. Your English is great!! Keep reviewing!

Jackie: Thank you! I already have this fic finished but am constantly adding and improving it. If you have any suggestions, please tell me 'cause it's not too late! Reviews help me post faster too!!

Arctic Wolf2: Sorry for the delay!! Review and I'll try get the next one up quicker! Hope you liked the chapter!!

Rain Warrior: Hoped you liked this chapter too!

Crazyfanfictionfanatic: LOL. Sure dude. Hehehehe.

Author's Note: Hey all. This story broke 100 reviews for the last chapter!! Yay!! My sister and I went out for a celebration drink (uh...smoothies that is). Anywho, to all you reviewers out there, you rock so much!! You guys make me so happy!! Since you guys were such good reviewers, I'm posting this fast and it's my longest chapter yet!!! Enjoy!! Keep up all the reviews!!

* * * * *

Harry couldn't scream. His whole body went numb, yet throbbed in unbelievable pain at the same time. He heard Aunt Petunia shrieking in the background about dealing with "those freaks" now and about blood on her white carpet. Harry stared in shocked silence at the man who was supposed to be his family. Uncle Vernon just stared down at him with cold eyes filled with pure hatred. He gasped as the knife was ripped out of his stomach and raised above his uncle's head for a final blow.

"Expelliarmus!" He heard a shout from the door, but couldn't find the strength to see who it was. He just concentrated on breathing, which was becoming increasingly difficult. He heard the Petrifying charm performed twice, but nothing was really registering in his brain anymore except for the now necessary instructions to breathe in and then out.

All of a sudden, Snape's blurry face came into view. Harry knitted his brows in confusion. Why was Snape here and why did he look worried? Nm He was saying something, but Harry couldn't comprehend the words. Finally, Snape said "Harry!" His brain understood that one, but he found he couldn't reply anyways, and the world slid softly into darkness.

After quickly "dealing" with the Dursleys, Snape grabbed Harry's wrist. Finding a weak pulse, he gathered the boy up in his arms and quickly Disapparated to the edge of Hogwart's wards. It was now night and he could see wizards still at work only because of the light shooting from their wands like fireworks. He ran as swiftly as he could toward the castle, holding the injured boy close to his chest as to now jolt him too much.

"Come on, Harry," he said, using the boy's first name only because no one else could hear him. Harry was losing a lot of blood, that much was obvious. He could feel the boy's blood beginning to seep through Snape's own robes. "Stay with me. We're almost there. Just hold on."

He sprinted straight to the infirmary. Luckily, there were only a few patients left in there now. Most had suffered injuries that could be quickly healed. He gently placed his student on the nearest open bed and closed the curtains around him all the while calling out the name of the medi-witch.

"What is it Severus?" she said, looking frazzled. She then caught sight of Harry. "Great Merlin! What in the world happened?"

"His relatives did this to him," he growled. Madam Pomfrey gasped. "His uncle stabbed him with a knife. I'm not sure what happened before I got there though."

Madam Pomfrey nodded in disbelief, but regained her senses quickly. She checked his pulse to find that it was weak. She began barking orders at Snape to bring her this or that, which he followed without complaint.

Snape was feeling the gnawing pains of guilt. If he had just told Dumbledore, none of this would have happened. He would have to inform the headmaster now, of course. On one hand, he was angry with himself for allowing this to stay a secret, leading to this, but on the other, was still convinced that it was best that not many people knew.

Finally, Madam Pomfrey had sealed up the stab wound, replenished his blood, mended Harry's broken arm, and healed his stomach as much as he could, until he had almost reached his maximum of magic his body was able to take.

"All right, well he should be all right, physically anyway. I injected a potion that should clear up the bruises within the next few days. His stomach and arm might be a bit sore, and the area around the stab

wound will be sensitive, but it'll go away in a week or so," she said somberly.

"Listen, Poppy, we need to keep this quiet. Those reporters would attack this story like animals and who knows how the student body would react. We should try to keep this from as much of the staff as possible; the boy's got enough on his mind without having his professors treating him differently," Snape said in a voice barely above whisper.

"Severus, we have to alert somebody."

"I know. I'm going to inform the headmaster...."

"Yes, well that's obvious, but what about his friends? He needs somebody for emotional support from someone he knows and trusts. You're a creepy potions teacher and I'm a nagging school nurse," Snape glared at her slightly for this comment. "We aren't what he needs right now."

Snape knew that she was right, but it could also be emotionally devastating to have his friends all treat him awkwardly at a time when he needs them the most. He flashed back to what Harry had been saying when originally in his office.

'That's it!' Snape thought. 'He said something about some neighbors that knew. He put himself in danger to go see them in the hospital, he must be close with them, but they're Muggles. Maybe we could just modify their memories afterwards.'

He decided that it was time to tell Dumbledore about what had happened and would then ask if the Muggles should be asked to come.

He found Dumbledore with some Ministry officials and asked for a word in private. When the headmaster started leading the way to his office, Snape gently grabbed his arm and suggested the hospital wing instead.

When they arrived, Snape led Dumbledore behind the curtain to Harry's bed, where he remained unconscious. Dumbledore inhaled sharply in seeing the Gryffindor so obviously injured. Snape was surprised to see his mentor suddenly looking wearier than he had ever seen him.

"What happened, Severus?" he demanded coldly.

"His relatives, Albus. Potter was being abused."

"What?" the elder man asked. His eyes lost their usual sparkle and for possibly the first time that Snape could remember, Dumbledore allowed a shocked expression onto his face.

Snape told Dumbledore what he knew, minus the details about Harry's initial injuries and his comment about not wanting to disappoint Dumbledore, including what he knew about the Muggle family. He omitted anything unnecessary to tell the headmaster, then profusely apologized for not having said something sooner. The headmaster sank into a chair next to Harry's unconscious form.

"I'm sorry, Albus. I guess I just didn't want to comprehend the seriousness of the situation. I kept telling myself that he would tell somebody. I was prepared to deal with it when summer break approached if it hadn't already been dealt with. I just didn't know he'd be going back to his relatives' before then." He then added in a lower voice, looking back down at Harry, "I just felt that he needed someone to trust."

"It's all right, Severus. I never guessed this. I don't know how I could have overlooked something so obvious! Not wanting to have attention drawn to himself. Skinny, short, and quiet for his age, especially when he first started here. Latching onto Hagrid, the one who he sees as having rescued him from them initially. It all makes sense. Maybe I just didn't want to see it. Maybe none of us wanted to see it." Snape closed his eyes briefly, knowing that this last part applied to him. "What did you do with his relatives?"

Snape grinned evilly. "Just a little spell to make them see the errors of their ways."

“Severus?” Dumbledore questioned with a warning tone. Snape sighed.

“I turned them all into donkeys to reveal the asses they really are. After a few days they will turn into humans again but retain the animal ears and tail. They can’t be removed and will only turn back once those monsters feel truly sorry for how they’ve treated Potter. I think the uncle in particular will be wearing a hat for a long time. I was going to turn them into cockroaches and then step on them, but I wanted them to have to face the public and feel the humiliation,” Snape said smugly. He waited for a scolding from Dumbledore, who always lectured him in being the bigger person, taking the morally right actions.

“Good,” the headmaster said quietly, gazing sadly at the injured boy. “Go find Harry’s owl, it responds to the name of Hedwig, and send it to ask his Muggle friends to come. They already know about magic and we can transport them here by Portkey. Yes, in fact include a small Portkey and instructions on how to use it right with the owl. They should get here as soon as they are able to.”

Snape could tell this was his cue to leave. He headed toward the Owlery to carry out Dumbledore’s instructions.

“...can’t believe this...who would do such a thing?...how didn’t I see this before?...poor dear...rotten Muggles...” Voices began swimming in and out of Harry’s hearing. He could recognize them, but was so tired. He just wanted to slip back into the comfortable darkness that had consumed him a few moments earlier.

“Albus, I think he’s coming around. Harry? Come one now, open your eyes. You can do it.” With some struggle, Harry lifted his heavy eyelids to find himself looking up into the face of Madam Pomfrey, Dumbledore right next to her.

“Where?” The word had involuntarily escaped his lips. He now recognized that he was in the Hogwarts hospital wing.

'What am I doing here?' he asked himself trying to remember. Then the night's events came flooding back: the fight with his uncle, being stabbed, his uncle being blown off of him, and Snape's blurry face above him. 'Snape! He was there! He saw!' Harry realized that his secret was out. Snape would have told Dumbledore and Madam Pomfrey and who knew who else. Harry groaned both at this realization and at the throbbing pain in his stomach, which was present although not nearly as strong as it had been when he was injured. Madam Pomfrey fussed over him for a few minutes until Dumbledore asked for a word in private with Harry.

"You're at Hogwarts, Harry, in the hospital wing." Harry nodded and the headmaster sat down next to him. "Do you remember what happened last night?" he asked, his blue eyes piercing Harry's soul. Harry nodded tearing his eyes away to focus on the bedpost instead. He prepared himself for the "what they did was wrong" speech that he had heard from the Stensons several times and had come to find absolutely humiliating rather than comforting. He just hoped he wouldn't be scolded for not telling anyone.

"Harry, I'm so sorry."

Harry whipped his head around in shock to look perplexedly into the face of his headmaster. This wasn't the "I'm sorry that this should happen to you" type of apology, but was rather, one seeking for forgiveness. It was the last thing on Earth he had expected. Now looking into his mentor's face, it looked far wearier than he had ever seen it, baffling Harry.

"Sir?" he choked out.

"It was a horrible decision on my part to put you there. I should have looked into the type of environment I was putting you into, or checked up on you. I never dreamed that this would happen," he said with utmost sincerity. Harry even thought he heard the slightest bit of shaking in the old man's voice. He didn't know what to say. He had secretly thought those very things a few times on bad nights locked in his cupboard, but had never actually blamed the man.

“Sir, don’t...it’s not your fault. Just, please, don’t tell the Weasleys or my friends or my professors or...”

“Harry,” Dumbledore interrupted, putting up a hand to stop him. “I will be informing a few select people to deal with this. I would suggest that you tell your friends, as friends are the greatest support through hard times, though this is yours to tell them and it’s not my place. I will, however, be informing Sirius. As your godfather, he has the right to know.”

“Oh Professor, please not Sirius, I...” Harry began to protest, but Dumbledore once again put up his hand to interrupt him.

“I’m sorry, Harry, but it’s for the best. If you’d like me to inform you when I know Sirius is in trouble, then you must allow him the same rights.” Harry couldn’t find the strength to argue anymore. He felt like everything was swirling down the drain. And the person he wanted to know the least was going to be told. Sirius had put himself in danger for Harry before, and he didn’t know if he could take that kind of guilt again. “Now, as for punishing your so-called family...”

“Sir, please, I don’t want to bring them to court or anything. I don’t care what happens to them. I just don’t want the press to know, or anyone else for that matter. Reporters would have a field day with this. They would...” Harry ranted frantically.

Dumbledore put up a hand to stop him.

“I was going to say that their punishment has already been taken care of unless you felt you would like to press charges. As I can see you don’t, I’d say there is no issue,” the headmaster said gravely.

“Oh,” Harry said in surprise. “What did Snape do to them?” he asked curiously.

“Professor Snape, Harry,” Dumbledore lightly scolded.

“Okay, what did Professor Snape do to them?”

Dumbledore opened his mouth to tell him but was interrupted by Madam Pomfrey who came bustling over with a potion.

“You can have story time later, Mr. Potter. Albus, my patient needs rest. No buts, Mr. Potter,” she said. Harry sighed and rolled his eyes. Dumbledore smiled at Harry’s reaction, but sadness was still etched into his expression.

“As you wish, Poppy,” he said, standing up from the chair. “But one last quick question if you please.”

Madame Pomfrey nodded her head irritably.

“Harry, did you have a dream of the battle at Hogwarts?”

“Oh yeah! And it was really weird. It was like I was there. And then I think I made Voldemort’s wand move, when he had the Cruciatus Curse on Mr. Weasley. But then he made my scar hurt. It ended as soon as he left. What happened after that? Is everyone okay? Nobody seemed seriously hurt or anything, but I only saw the main entrance and they were at the others too and...”

“Yes yes, Harry, everyone was fine. Nobody was seriously injured and we captured many of the Death Eaters. I’m sure you will hear all about it soon. But for now, get some rest. You deserve it.” He nodded to the nurse and then left the room. Harry was sorry to see him go.

“All right, Harry dear, time for one of these wonderful potions you love so much,” she said with a joking smile.

“What happened to ‘Mr. Potter’?” Harry asked.

“Well, you’ve spent more time here than any other student I’ve ever had. I think it merits you to be called by your first name.”

“I feel so honored,” he said with a laugh. She smiled at him sadly and Harry sighed.

‘And people wonder why I don’t like telling people things. One more look of pity and I might scream,’ Harry thought to himself.

“Here you go dear. Drink it down,” she said handing him a cup with a familiar-looking potion.

“Let me guess, Dreamless Sleep Potion.”

Madam Pomfrey smiled. “You got it. Now drink it up.”

Harry decided not to argue and drank the potion, handing the cup back to Madam Pomfrey. She set it on the nightstand and then sat down next to him on the edge of his bed. She looked searchingly into Harry’s eyes. Tears began to silently drip down her face.

“Madam Pomfrey?” Harry asked worriedly.

“Don’t mind me, love, it’s just that you visit this place far too often. And it seems that each time you come, it’s for an even worse reason. There are so many hardships in your life. I just don’t want to see them break your spirit,” she said quietly through her tears.

Harry gave her a tired smile.

“Don’t worry, I promise I won’t let them,” he whispered as he felt the tiredness wash over him. Madam Pomfrey wiped away the tears on her cheeks just to have new ones make them wet again. She smiled warmly at him.

“You just get some sleep, dear.”

She leaned forward and gently kissed Harry’s forehead. She smiled warmly at him as his eyes slipped shut. Harry felt the weight lift from the bed as she went to clear up the potion. Harry smiled slightly, thinking about the motherly gesture before slipping off into slumber.

When Harry woke the sun was shining through the window of the Hospital Wing. Harry remembered his conversation with Dumbledore from the night before. He was going to tell Sirius. Snape knew. Who would he tell?

'Now everyone would know how weak I am, unable to even defend myself properly. Dumbledore was probably disappointed, even if he didn't show it. Uncle Vernon was right; I'm a disgrace to my family and my friends. And now Sirius, Merlin, what will he think? He'll think I'm a bloody coward, that's what he'll think. Why is this happening?' he thought, aggravated. As much as he had entertained the thought that their worrying annoyed him, he really wished the Stensons were there. Someone that wouldn't be shocked by the information, someone he didn't have to explain things to. Harry shook away the thought.

'Don't be stupid,' he told himself. 'They don't deserve to have all your problems dumped on them all the time. Would you really want them to know this anyways? Would you really want to hear them go through the same dumb reassurances they always preach?' Yet, he knew the answer was yes. He grew angry with himself and felt even weaker than before. He had always prided himself on being emotionally independent. Then he met Ron, Hermione, and the Weasleys. Then he met Sirius. Now, he had met the Stensons.

"Harry?"

Harry was broken from his reverie by a shaky voice that sounded familiar. He shot up his head to meet the eyes of Dakota Stenson. Harry was shocked. How was this possible? He told himself he must be dreaming, but Kota burst into tears and rushed over, catching him in a tight hug that painfully informed Harry that he was, in fact, not dreaming.

"Kota? What are you doing here?" Harry asked, confused. Just then, Mr. and Mrs. Stenson came in as well, talking with Madam Pomfrey.

"Oh Harry dear," Mrs. Stenson cried and burst out into sobs of her own.

"What are you guys doing here?" Harry asked again, still perplexed.

"Hedwig came round hooting like crazy. The letter she brought said that you were injured and that we could come to see you. It told us to

all touch this quill and we would be taken to you, so we did and we're here. The nurse told us what happened," Kota explained through her tears. Harry looked down at his hands.

"It's not that big of a deal..." he started.

"Not a big deal? He tried to kill you, Harry!" Mr. Stenson said in half anger, half distress. "They said you would have died if your professor hadn't found you when he did and they hadn't been able to use magic to help you."

Harry didn't know what to say and took his famous pose of staring at his hands.

"Harry." Harry looked up to see Mr. Stenson sitting next to him. "You're not going back there. Ever again." Harry didn't know if this would actually turn out to be true, since it would be dangerous to put him anywhere else with Lord Voldemort after him, but nevertheless, the words were comforting. He nodded to show he was listening. There was an awkward silence as the Stensons were obviously taking in the bruises on his face and the now healing cut.

"Hey, I'm well enough to walk around, I can give you a tour of the school if you'd like," he said enthusiastically, throwing off the covers to his bed. Mrs. Stenson nodded, wiping away a quick tear, which Harry chose to ignore. "Just give me a second to change. As stylish as these infirmary pajamas are, I'd rather be seen in my school robes by the many people trying to repair the castle." Dakota laughed and they let Harry change into a set of his school robes behind the curtain. He was still sore and changing was more difficult than he let on, but he changed fast nonetheless to divert any demands from the medi-witch to remain in bed. He applied a few masking spells to cover up a few of the bruises. Soon, they were leaving the hospital wing with Harry leading.

"What did you guys think of traveling by Portkey?" he asked.

"That was the freakiest thing ever!" said Dakota animatedly. "I felt like I was being yanked around by my stomach."

"Yeah, I can never stay on my feet with those things," Harry said in agreement. "I guess it's better by Floo though, that makes me sick!" At their confused expressions, Harry quickly explained the Floo network. They looked like they were still a tad skeptical, which was ironic since they had just traveled by touching a quill.

He first showed them the great hall, explaining the enchanted ceiling. There were a ton of wizards repairing some of the walls and columns inside. In fact, everywhere they went, they kept running across groups of wizards shooting spells for reparation or strengthening protection spells. This seemed to capture the attention of the two adults the most, who seemed to be realizing just how real the whole wizarding world was.

"Harry!" he heard called from behind and turned around to find Mr. Weasley waving and walking over. "Rick? Kathryn?"

"Don't worry, Mr. Weasley, they know now," Harry assured him.

"Oh good, it was so confusing trying to come up with a Muggle occupation. Luckily, though, I do know a thing or two about Muggles and probably could have fooled you. I know all about ekeltricity and we just got a fellytone a few summers ago." The adult Stensons looked confused at this. Harry snuck a smile to Kota who was suppressing a giggle. "I love Muggle things though, we should really have a chat sometime..." He paused all of a sudden and stared at Harry as if seeing him for the first time. "Harry, what in the name of Merlin happened to you?" he asked stepping forward to look at the fading bruises and the cut on Harry's face.

"Er...fight with my cousin," he murmured. The Stensons all gave him sympathetic looks, but it was Mr. Stenson who came to his rescue.

"So, Arthur, what is it exactly that you are all doing here? I'm very new with all this magic stuff. I can still hardly believe this is all real!"

"Well, I can show you if you'd like. I'll answer all of your magic questions if you don't mind an interrogation about all things Muggle," he said with a laugh. He shot a suspicious look at Harry's face.

"Sounds great, Arthur. Let's get started," Mrs. Stenson said warmly.

The adults all went off together, Mr. Weasley still looking a tad skeptical about Harry's story. The two teenagers vowed to stay out of trouble and started off in the opposite direction.

"So, what do you guys have to eat around here?" Kota asked slyly implying that she was hungry.

"I'm glad you asked," Harry said with a grin and led her to the kitchens. Kota was amazed at the way to get in and practically had a heart attack in seeing her first house elf.

"Harry Potter, sir!" Harry braced himself as Dobby seized him around the waist, hugging him tightly.

"Hi Dobby," Harry gasped.

"Who has Harry Potter got with him?" he asked eyeing Kota, who looked like she was going to jump out of her skin any second.

"This is my friend, Kota. She's a Muggle." Dobby beamed at Kota who gave a weak smile in return, taking a slight step back.

"Any friend of Harry Potter is a friend of mine, miss," Dobby exclaimed. "Dobby thinks Harry Potter is the greatest wizard in the entire world, miss. Harry Potter gives Dobby his favorite presents of socks and saved him from his old bad master. Harry Potter is saying that Dobby should not be punishing himself no longer, miss. Harry Potter is being generous and noble and selfless..."

"Er...Dobby, do you think you we could have a few snacks?" Harry interrupted, his face burning with embarrassment. Dobby and several other house-elves ran off, bringing back many snacks. Dobby returned with all the socks Harry had ever given him, including the ones he had sent him this last Christmas, and insisted on showing Kota, who was beginning to find it very amusing. Harry thanked Dobby and pulled Kota out quickly. She kept calling him "Harry Potter, sir" and talking about how kind and noble he was for his generous gifts of socks.

"Oh shut it Kota. Besides, what can I help it if creatures of all kind find me awe-inspiring," he teased. She rolled her eyes and gently pushed him into a wall. She suddenly stopped. "Wait, Harry, is George Weasley here? His dad is!" she asked excitedly.

"Nope, he's not here so you can wipe the drool up off the floor." Kota looked dismayed. "Don't worry, I'll make sure to get you two some alone time this summer or something." She cheered back up.

Eventually the Stensons had to leave and Harry reluctantly said goodbye. They Portkeyed back to Surrey. He made a mental note to give Kota some praise for handling Portkey travel so well; sarcastic praise of course. She had looked as if she had been petrified by a Basilisk when she was told to grip the quill again. It seemed that she really hadn't enjoyed her first trip this way and wasn't too eager to take a second.

Harry had to spend the next few days in the hospital wing reading books on Quidditch to pass the time. At one point, the moment he had been dreading came.

He was engrossed in his book when the Hospital Wing door burst open, causing Harry to drop his book in surprise. He looked up to see his very angry and upset godfather.

"Harry, oh Merlin, are you okay? Tell me what they said wasn't true. He was lying right? This is some sick joke, right? Tell me you've been perfectly safe and that you weren't hurt," he pleaded. Harry didn't know what to say. He settled for his usual stuttering, non-comprehensible speech while taking immense interest in his lap.

Sirius obviously took this as confirmation to what Dumbledore had already told him. He slumped into a chair next to Harry's bed with a glazed expression. His mouth opened and closed like he didn't know what to say. It reminded Harry of a fish.

"Now, Sirius, don't overreact. Please don't do something stupid," Harry begged. Sirius rested his head in his hands, massaging his temples.

"Harry, how long has this kind of thing been going on?" he asked looking into Harry's eyes to detect if he was telling the truth.

"Not very long," he said slipping his gaze away. It was only stretching the truth a little.

"Not very long as in a few days? A few weeks?" he implored.

"A few years..." Harry said quietly.

"What? Harry, look at me in the eyes and answer me, okay?" Harry obeyed. "When did this first start?"

"Er...I don't know. It was before I can really remember, but not as bad really," he mumbled. Sirius looked shocked. His eyes flashed murderously and he stood up quickly, looking as if he was going to give credence to his reputation.

"I'm going to kill them. I'm going to rip off their bloody heads. I'm going to..."

"Sirius!" Harry scolded. "Stop. You're not going to kill them or decapitate them in any way, all right?"

"I have to go. I have to kill them or hurt them or something. They'll pay those bastards!" he said starting for the door.

Harry got out of bed quickly. He ran to place himself between Sirius and the door.

"No Sirius, please. Don't do anything stupid. You'll get thrown in Azkaban and you'll be gone again. Don't go. Please, stay here with me. I haven't seen you in so long," Harry pleaded desperately. He could see that Sirius was calming down at his words, probably touched that his godson wanted his company.

Suddenly the anger left his face and was replaced by worry.

“What are you doing out of bed? You need to lie down. Come on, I’ll stay with you. I can’t believe you’re just running around this room when you’re hurt,” Sirius began to ramble, ushering his godson back to his bed. Harry didn’t have the heart to tell him that he’d been allowed out of bed and had been walking around Hogwarts for the past few days. Instead, he allowed himself to be escorted back into bed as Sirius sank into the chair next to him.

He sat back shaking his head.

“James and Lily must be rolling over in their graves.” He paused then looked at Harry. “I’m so sorry Harry, I’ve been a horrible godfather to you.”

“Sirius, don’t say that, this is not your fault at all!” Why was everyone apologizing? It was getting on Harry’s nerves.

“Well, I swear to you on my Marauder status that you will never have to go through that again. Listen, kid, this summer I promise that you’re going to have the best time of your life! A huge room, there’s a miniature Quidditch pitch around back, and I have tons of old junk you can help me sort through...”

“Er...no offense Sirius, but I have no idea what you’re going on about.”

“No one told you?”

Harry shook his head.

“I guess Dumbledore though I ought to. Well, I have great news then. You know how they caught some Death Eaters?” At Harry’s nod, he continued. “Well, one of them was a certain rat that we’re not too fond of.” He smiled at Harry’s astonished look. “They’re going to interrogate him and everything, and it’s not quite official yet, but basically, it’s enough evidence to prove my innocence.”

“You’re free?” Harry asked in disbelief.

“As a bird,” Sirius smiled. “And, if you still want to, this summer, we’ll move into the Black House, which looks like a miniature Muggle White House from the States from the outside, and I’ll make sure it’ll be the best summer you’ve ever had.”

“Really? You’re serious?” Harry asked excitedly.

“Of course I’m serious. Serious is my middle name. Oh wait, it’s my first name.” Harry burst out laughing.

“I’m guessing you’ve used that one a lot huh?”

“Oh yeah, that joke never dies and never will. I assure you that you’ll learn to avoid asking if I’m serious at all costs in the near future.”

Harry and Sirius spent the rest of the day laughing about their summer plans, nearly forgetting the dark events that had brought them together.

Finally, when the school was repaired, the rest of the students came back and Harry was allowed to return to his dorm. Ron and Hermione were relieved to see that Harry was safe. Over dinner, they told Harry all about Beauxbatons.

“There were fountains and statues everywhere made of gold. It looked like a palace or something,” Ron explained.

“Yeah,” Hermione jumped in, “And for dinner, there were smaller, circular tables with tablecloths and candlesticks. Everything was really proper. Of course, we all had to sleep in sleeping bags in their dining hall.”

“There weren’t any poltergeists and all the ghosts were so clean looking. You couldn’t even tell how they died. The Bloody Baron would have been chased out of there and Nearly-Headless Nick wouldn’t have ever been allowed to freak people out with his head. And I swear there was harp music playing all over the place. Everything was so...” Ron looked to Hermione for the right word.

“Sparkly,” they said in unison. Harry laughed.

"Thank Merlin we're back at Hogwarts," Hermione commented. Harry raised his eyebrow.

"You made it sound like this place was paradise."

"Exactly. It was horrible!" she exclaimed.

"Yeah, it was like you couldn't mess up or joke around. It seemed like you were at some fancy party and always had to be on your best behavior," Ron explained disgustedly.

Harry laughed. "Well, I'm glad you guys are back too."

"How was your little holiday? Where did Dumbledore send you anyways?" Ron asked through a mouthful of food.

"The Dursleys," he said making a face. "But I was allowed to come back really quickly. There was a ton of people here fixing everything and strengthening the wards and such. I saw your Dad and your brothers, Ron." He paused. "And Dumbledore even let the Stensons drop by for the day," he added, figuring that Ron would find out from his family anyway.

"Really? Why?" Hermione asked curiously.

"I don't know, just to keep me out of the way I guess."

"What did they think?" asked Ron.

"Mr. and Mrs. Stenson seemed a bit overwhelmed. Kota looked how I probably did on my first day here."

"Like Goyle when he's asked a question in class?" Ron asked jokingly. Harry chuckled some mashed potatoes at him with a laugh.

"Pretty much. She was a little freaked out by the house elves though."

“Yeah, well I guess they are kind of freaky-looking though, even if they do make some great food,” Ron said taking a big bite of chicken. Harry’s laughs turned into fake coughs as he noticed Hermione glaring at him.

Life was good.

* * * * *

Eowyn of Ithilien: Well don’t worry, Harry didn’t die this chapter. I’m glad that you enjoyed the last chapter! In response to McGonagall giving Harry the password, she probably figured that he’d figure it out anyways if she brought him there herself because she’d have to say it in front of him, right? Also, Harry’s not exactly a psycho-killer out for Dumbledore’s blood. I don’t think it’s a huge concern of hers, or Dumbledore’s really. Hope you liked the chapter! You rock!!

It’s Temporary Insanity: Yeah, sometimes Harry is too proud for his own good. He should’ve run away long ago but no, he’s stubborn. He did try wandless magic, but he froze and it couldn’t do it. He tried to use his wandless magic, but in seeing his uncle’s outraged expression, fear overwhelmed him and he froze. He couldn’t concentrate enough to use it. I agree with you about . It’s so stubborn sometimes!! Hope you liked the chapter.

Maximum Poofy-Queen of AU: I’m glad you like Snape!! He’s so cool! As you can see, he did save the day. The Dursleys really suck, don’t they. Are you proud? I updated so soon and with such a long chappy, just so you wouldn’t die of suspense!

Catiechan: Yup, well, not everyone found out, but some people definitely did. But none of the people in this chapter (besides Harry) know about the cancer. Whether Harry will die or not, we’ll just have to see.

Keronshara: LOL your review made me laugh so hard. When you said “I hate you” I had to do a double take and then burst out laughing. I’m very scared for me and my future grandchildren now. That fear made me update soon as a peace offering. No big cliffie here, but I

can't have a cliffie for every chapter or things would get too predictable. Call me warned. I'll try not to be too scared. hehehe

Jackie: Glad you liked the last chapter. Sorry to dash your dreams, but sadly, Harry's not getting kidnapped in this fic. But it was a really good idea!! Unfortunately, I've already looked through my fic and I can't find a way to add it. I hope you like the story anyways!! Hope you liked the chapter.

Fantagal: Yay! I'm glad you like the story. I hope I'm killing you in a fun way. Lol. Keep reading and reviewing!! Hope you continue to like the fic!

Srialb: Ooh, one of your favorites, eh? Yay!! That makes me soo happy. So you think you know what's going to happen, eh? Email me or something and tell me what you think. I won't tell you if you're right or wrong, but I'd be interested to see what you're thinking. Hope to keep surprising you!!

Joe: Yup. He's getting to be one powerful fellow. And Dumbledore is only human. And Sev came to the rescue whoo!! Hope you liked this chappy!!

T-Lev: Oooh....J.K. jr.? I like it, lol!! You read all of it in one day? Wow, that's some feat. Thank you!! I loved your review! It made me get up and dance like a crazed lunatic.

Crazyfanfictionfanatic: Ooh, everyone seems to think I'm evil for the last cliffy, I'm so flattered!!

Maha: I'm glad you like my story! I updated really soon since I got so many wonderful reviews! I hope I can make you a full-fledged fan.

Ckat44: Oh you know you love the cliffies. Evil makes it all the more exciting!

Thank you also for the fantabulous reviews from Arctic Wolf 2, Nikki, Rain Warrior, animalcrazy10102, coward in the shadows, Lauren, GrimmyD, and manateegirl524.

Author's Note: IMPORTANT!! READ ME!! Alright folks, time for the vote/debate. This is the thing I've been debating with myself about forever. So I'm leaving up to you guys. Should Harry tell the Stenson's about the cancer? The reason's I'm slightly wary of doing this is because A) I don't want so many dramatic scenes that they take away from the other ones. (meaning I don't want the Stenson's reaction make say...Sirius's reaction to seem less dramatic or important.) B) I'm not quite sure how to write it. I have an idea of what it would be like, but it will be hard to write. (I haven't written it yet.) So it's up to you. Tell me what you guys want and try to convince me why I should or shouldn't put the scene in. If you want the scene, do you want Harry to tell them or for it to sort of slip from a friend (in which case I'd have to bring Kota to Hogwarts)? Please, give me your advice and any suggestions you have on their reactions or what you want. I'm sorry the posting has started to take longer, but it's really in your guys' benefit. Your wonderful reviews have inspired me to go back and improve the story so I've been writing like a mad woman!! So read and REVIEW so I know what to do!! Hey that rhymed!! Oh and a special thanks to Dadaiiro for recently reviewing all of my chapters!! Thanks!! That was so fun!!

Ron and Harry were racing to the dungeons. Professor Trelawney had kept Harry after to discuss his future death a bit. Ron had waited for him. When Harry finally escaped his annoying professor, they had very little time to get to their next class, which just had to be Potions of course.

They sprinted along the corridors. When they turned a corner, there was a young girl, a first or second year. She was crying in frustration. Her bag had split and she was now trying to gather her books into her arms but there were too many and they kept slipping. She was glancing at her watch, obviously realizing she was going to be late for class. Ron and Harry paused. Ron caught Harry's eye and pointed to his own tie. Harry looked at the girl's. It was green and silver. Ron motioned for Harry to come on but Harry ran up to the girl.

"Hey, don't worry. This happens all the time," he said to the girl, helping her pick up her books. He quickly mended her bag with a

simple spell and helped her put the books inside. "Where are you going?" he asked.

"Er...Transfiguration," she said as she wiped away some tears.

"All right, go to the end of this corridor and on your right there's a secret passage under the big tapestry. It'll take you right to the classroom," Harry said quickly, pointing the way.

"Yeah right," she snapped, looking at the red and gold of Harry's tie.

"Listen," Harry said with a kind smile, "I'm not trying to trick you, I promise. If it doesn't lead you straight to the classroom, tell Professor McGonagall that I gave you bad directions and she'll take off points."

"How do you know I won't just tell her that anyway," she asked cheekily.

Harry just smiled at her. "I guess I'll just have to trust you."

Harry followed Ron and they began running off toward the dungeon as the girl ran back to the tapestry, looking over her shoulder at Harry before disappearing underneath it.

"I can't believe you just did that, mate. She's a Slytherin for Merlin's sake. Of course she's going to lie. You should have left her. She would've gotten points off for Slytherin!" Ron breathed as they raced along more corridors. "Now we're really going to be late."

"Ron, she needed help. Don't you remember being a first year? If Prefects and the older students didn't help us out we would never have made it."

"Name one time a Slytherin Prefect helped us out. They don't help us and we don't help them. It's a general rule, Harry."

"Well, don't you think it's time that changed?" he asked as they approached the dungeon finally. Luckily the class was still waiting outside the door to the Potions room. As usual, the Gryffindors and the Slytherins were separated from each other, occasionally shooting

glares at the other group as they waited for the Potions master to open the door.

“Ooh look everyone, it’s Potty and the Weasel,” Draco Malfoy drawled. The Slytherins sniggered as the Gryffindors rolled their eyes.

“Wow, Malfoy, that’s really original. You’ve only been using that one since first year,” Harry said, in mock surprise. “I mean, what will you think of next? Maybe you could make fun of Ron being poor and me being an orphan, you know, just to try something new.”

The Gryffindors were now the ones sniggering as the Slytherins just glared.

“Well, why think of new ways to insult you when the old ones are so easy?” Malfoy retorted.

“Because people got bored after the first year of it.” The Gryffindors all laughed in consent. “Even your cronies don’t laugh very hard at your insults any more,” Harry said calmly. He obviously had the upper hand in the situation. He turned away and began to talk to Hermione.

“So Potter, where were you while we were at Beauxbatons?” Malfoy asked. “I heard you were in the Hospital Wing the whole time.”

Harry froze. Ron and Hermione both looked at him in surprise. He forced himself to look calm.

“Well where did you think I’d sleep when the wards around the dorms and common rooms were being strengthened?”

“Oh I don’t know, perhaps in the kitchens with the dirty little house elves. I’m sure they’d have a pile of rags for you to sleep on. They’d remind you of those clothes you show up to the train station in each year. Is it some Muggle fashion to look like you sleep in a gutter, or are you just trying to fit in better with the Weasleys?”

Malfoy looked extremely pleased as Harry's face turned red and Ron started toward him with a fist raised. Harry and Neville grabbed Ron's arms to hold him back.

"Wow, back to poverty jokes. Once again, Malfoy, your originality astounds me," Harry said, glaring at the blond-haired boy. Ron calmed down and smirked at Malfoy for having his own insult used against him.

Suddenly the door slammed open and Snape looked around, trying to determine if anyone had been fighting. He told them to enter and walked back inside, robes billowing menacingly behind him.

When they got their potions started, Hermione leaned over.

"Harry," she whispered worriedly, "did you really stay in the Hospital Wing while we were gone?"

"Yeah," he whispered back, "but it was just like I told Malfoy. Plus they didn't want me staying in a secluded place when Death Eaters had been around the castle earlier. You know how it is. Overprotectiveness for the Boy-Who-Lived as always."

"So you weren't in there because something was wrong?" Ron asked in a hushed voice.

"No. Ask your dad, Ron, he saw me walking around the castle. I was fine! Nothing was wrong with me, honest."

Harry looked up and saw Snape looking at him. He had obviously heard at least the last part of their conversation. Harry couldn't read Snape's stony expression, but he knew his own was flushed with embarrassment.

Snape finally looked away, much to Harry's relief.

Snape went back to his desk to grade papers. If the situation would have been with anyone else, Snape would have kept the student behind and assured him or her that he would be there if they needed to talk. He had been the first one to discover the abuse after all.

Somebody in that situation would certainly need someone to talk to, especially if they refused to let their friends know about it. He wasn't totally cold-hearted after all.

Any other student. But this was Harry Potter, son of James Potter. The same James Potter who used to be his worst enemy in school. James Potter who used to embarrass him in front of all his peers.

And Harry Potter wasn't any other student. Therefore, Snape let the boy slip out through the dungeon doors at the end of class without calling him back. Snape felt eased his guilt by reminding himself of all the awful things James Potter had done to him when he had been a student at Hogwarts.

As he remembered all the times James had bullied him, he easily pictured Harry doing the same to present students. The father and son looked so much alike after all.

By the time he had finished grading the papers, he felt fully justified in leaving the young Potter on his own.

"All right, Harry, good work. Now I want you to try it with all three of us against you," Dumbledore said, eyes sparkling. Harry was breathing hard from the duels he had just had with the three professors separately. Harry nodded. "Now remember," the headmaster continued, "it doesn't really matter the type of curses we throw. The main thing is to not get hit by any of them. Pretend each of them is an Unforgivable. That means no shields will work and you can only fight one of the three curses, so you can't absorb them. This is going to be pure dodging and firing back, from three directions. Are you ready?"

Harry nodded and the three professors surrounded him and began circling. Dumbledore shot a curse at him and Harry jumped out of the way. He ducked to avoid Lupin's curse and then quickly jumped to avoid one from Professor McGonagall. He tried to disarm his head of house but she easily blocked him. Harry jumped out of the line of a light from Dumbledore's wand, right into one from Lupin's wand.

He felt his legs spring together and become stiff. He lost his balance and fell forward to his hands in a pushup position.

Lupin quickly undid the Leg-Locker Curse and helped Harry up.

"That," he gasped, "is impossible."

"For most, I would say it is. For you, I say it isn't," Dumbledore said as they all drank some water. "When you concentrate, Harry, you seem to sense what your opponent will do. If you can tap into that and apply it to more than one person, I think you can do it."

"Okay," Harry said with a nod, "just give me a second to figure out how to do that."

The three professors laughed and surrounded Harry again, but waited for him to tell them that he was ready.

Harry closed his eyes and took a few deep breaths. He focused his concentration.

'Okay, three opponents. Where are they? What are they feeling?' he asked himself silently. Gradually, he felt them. He knew where they were. He opened his eyes and nodded.

"Ready," he said firmly.

He felt McGonagall getting ready to fire along with Lupin, but he knew the former would shoot the curse first, straight at his chest. Lupin would be aiming at his legs. He dodged McGonagall's curse and jumped over Lupin's, he felt Dumbledore shooting his off and moved right as the curse was being shot. Lupin and McGonagall both fired at the same time, and Harry had to dive to the ground to dodge them, immediately, rolling over as the headmaster shot one where he had just been lying. He rolled onto his back, dodging another curse, and shot a Body-Binder at the Defense professor. The spell caught Lupin by surprise and the man was soon on the floor, stiff as a board. Only two more to go and he had an idea what to do.

He started firing spells at the professors, purposefully to one side or the other, forcing them to dodge them in the direction he wanted. He sensed where they were. He shot one last curse at the headmaster's left side, making him jump to the right. They were now right where Harry wanted them, directly across from one another. He faced Dumbledore who shot a curse at his chest. Harry dove down. The curse flew past him, hitting the Transfiguration Professor instead, sending her down.

In the moment of Dumbledore's surprise, he jumped back to his feet and shouted "Expelliarmus!" The headmaster's wand was in his hand a second later.

Out of breath, Harry gave the headmaster back his wand with an exhilarated grin. He and Dumbledore undid their curses to the two professors on the floor. They both cheerfully congratulated Harry as he sank into a chair, drinking down another glass of water. Dumbledore's eye twinkled brightly.

"Excellent, Harry. You got Professor Lupin by using a vulnerable position to your advantage. He underestimated you since you were on the ground, and you used that. That was good with getting me to hit Professor McGonagall. I didn't even notice how you herded us into the correct positions until after I hit her. You used my moment of surprise to disarm me. Well done. Now what I want you to..."

The door opened, catching the attention of the four occupants of the room. It was Snape. When he saw that Harry was there, the memory of finding the boy bleeding on the floor of his relatives flashed through his mind, as it now did half the times he saw the boy. He quickly fixed his usual cold expression on his face.

"Er...I'm sorry, I didn't know I was interrupting something. I was just looking for you, Lupin. Here's the Wolfsbane Potion for this month," he said, carrying in a smoking goblet, which he handed to Lupin.

"Thank you Severus," Lupin said, setting the goblet down on his desk to drink later. Snape nodded curtly and turned to leave.

"Wait, Severus," Dumbledore called. Snape looked back and Dumbledore motioned him over. "But close the door if you may." Snape followed Dumbledore's instructions, looking around at the others suspiciously.

"Yes, Albus?"

"I'd like you to duel with Mr. Potter."

"What?" Snape asked glancing at the boy who looked surprised as well.

"Another duel?" Harry asked in disappointment. They had already done more that night than in any of his other tutoring sessions. He was ready to go crawl into bed and sleep for ten years.

"Yes. Just one more for tonight and then we'll let you go. Severus, we've been working on improving Harry's dueling skills in light of present circumstances. Harry, what I'm about to tell you is extremely confidential and it's important that you tell absolutely no one, not even your friends," Dumbledore said looking from Professor Snape to Harry. Harry noticed Snape rub his arm and realized what it was probably about.

"You mean about Professor Snape being a spy?" he blurted out. The four adults looked at him in surprise.

"How did you...The Dark Lord doesn't know does he?" Snape asked quickly.

"No no, we figured it out last year, Hermione, Ron, and I, that is. We knew you had the Dark Mark on your arm and the headmaster asked you to do something after the Tri-Wizard Tournament. It wasn't too difficult to put the pieces together. Besides," he said with a slight smile toward Dumbledore, "before the last attack, Professor Dumbledore told the other professors that you had been summoned to Voldemort so that was kind of a big clue as well."

Dumbledore let out a surprised laugh. "Merlin, I did say that didn't I? I didn't even think about that. Well, now that you know, I can tell you

that Professor Snape is the only one of us with inside knowledge to the ways that Death Eaters are trained to fight. I think it would be very useful to see what that's like. I'd say, everything besides the killing curse will be fine. You're ready for the other Unforgivables, I'd say."

"But Albus, the way I duel is certainly too advanced for a student. Potter wouldn't stand a chance," Snape said with a superior look at Harry. Dumbledore smiled slyly.

"Well, we'll see about that," he said with a wink at Harry. The two professors behind him grinned, eager to see Snape's surprise with Harry's ability to duel. So far, only Dumbledore, Lupin, and McGonagall knew about the tutoring and the advances they had seen in Harry.

"Fine, as long as I'm not held accountable when I hurt the boy," he said, pulling out his wand.

Harry concentrated on Snape and suppressed a grin. Snape wasn't worried at all. Harry could sense his low expectations. This would be easy compared to his last duel. He set down his glass and pulled his own wand out.

He walked over and faced Snape. The two bowed as the three other professors leaned back in their chairs to watch.

"Remember Severus, I want you to use every dirty trick they've taught you and don't hold back. Anything goes, save for Avada Kedavra. Begin any time you wish."

"Expelliarmus!" he shouted, but Harry easily blocked the curse, not bothering to send one back yet.

Snape began to shout a curse at Harry, but seeing Harry start to jump left, shifted the direction of his wand quickly and shouted, "Imperio." Harry jumped right into the curse. The first one had been a fake, a bluff to see where Harry would move.

Harry felt the familiar wave of calm in his mind. A voice told him to lower his wand. Harry resisted rolling his eyes. Snape didn't know how well he could fight this particular curse. He was about to just keep cursing Snape, but changed his mind, letting a blank look slip onto his face. He remembered the headmaster congratulating him on attacking when the enemy lowered their expectations. He was going to see if he could do it again.

He slowly lowered his wand hand, maintaining the blank look. Snape looked smugly over at the professors.

"That was far too simple."

"Expelliarmus!" Harry yelled. Snape's wand was in his hand a second later. Lupin and McGonagall both laughed as Snape's jaw dropped.

"You were saying, Severus?" the head of Gryffindor asked in delight.

"I liked the fake, Professor. You did that to see where I was going to jump, right? I'll have to watch out for that one," Harry said, handing the Potions master back his wand.

"I should let you know, Severus, that Harry is practically immune to the Imperius Curse.

"But I saw his face go blank, and he lowered his wand!" Snape protested.

"Yeah, I was just pretending so I could catch you off-guard. I guess I should have mentioned it earlier so it wouldn't have been unfair," Harry said politely.

"Nothing's unfair in dueling," Snape said looking interested. "Let's try that again. Ready, Potter?"

Harry nodded. He was tired but he could feel that Snape still had low expectations. He wouldn't miss the opportunity to prove himself to the man.

Snape definitely rose his level of dueling a few notches. He fired curses in almost immediate succession. Harry blocked and dodged, making sure to do the latter of the two each time he heard the word Crucio. He didn't bother firing any back until he could feel the opportunity.

"Crucio! Crucio!" Snape yelled, firing the curse at each of Harry's sides. He had to turn sideways and suck in his stomach to dodge them, but one came so close, it burned his back.

He felt himself tiring. He pointed his wand to Snape's left side and opened his mouth. Snape noticed and jumped to the right, just as Harry wanted.

"Expelliarmus!" Harry yelled, changing the direction of his wand at the last moment. Snape's wand flew through the air and Harry grabbed it. He quickly handed a surprised Snape his wand for the second time that night.

"Right before you came, Harry beat each of us separately, and then all of us together," Lupin said proudly.

"All three of you? Even you Albus? It was three on one?" Snape asked incredulously.

Dumbledore smiled and nodded. "What do you say, Severus? We could use your expertise. Shall we plan on a four on one duel for the next lesson?"

Everyone turned to Snape who slowly nodded. He looked reluctant, but curiosity seemed to overwhelm his doubts. "I'll be there. Potter needs to learn the dark side of dueling as well."

"Excellent," said the headmaster with a grin. "Now why don't you run off to bed Harry before you fall asleep where you're standing," he said kindly.

"I'll walk you there, Mr. Potter," Professor McGonagall said after seeing Harry stumble slightly. Harry knew she just wanted to make sure he made it back without nodding off in the hallway.

“That’s all right, Professor. I can manage,” Harry said with a slight blush.

“I insist. It’s on my way.”

Harry nodded and said goodnight to the other professors before he and Professor McGonagall left the room.

“I’m very proud of you, Harry. You’re doing an excellent job,” she said with an affectionate smile.

“Er...thanks Professor,” Harry said sheepishly. He paused remembering something. “Professor, by any chance, did one of your younger Slytherin students tell you that I gave them bad directions to your classroom?”

The woman looked confused. “No, why?”

Harry smiled. “No reason. Just proof that not all Slytherins are bad, I guess. They really got stuck with a bad reputation, huh?”

“Yes. Yes they definitely did. Each house has students with great qualities, but people generally recognize only those who stand out the most in them. For Slytherin, most often the—well, the wrong type stand out the most, and the house is now often associated with dark wizards,” Professor McGonagall explained with a sigh.

“And I guess when everyone thinks of you as bad, it’s a lot easier to act badly toward others,” Harry mused thinking of the girl snapping at him earlier. She wasn’t a bad person, Harry could see as much, but she had probably been treated as little other than an evil Slytherin and was therefore on her guard against anyone in a different house.

“Exactly. However, it’s difficult to convince people of that when the prejudices are so etched into everyone’s mind.”

“It sure doesn’t help that Slytherin’s pretty much chosen Malfoy for their spokesperson, well, at least for the fifth years.”

Professor McGonagall smirked. "I didn't hear that, Mr. Potter."

They soon arrived at the portrait of the Fat Lady and Professor McGonagall went on to her own rooms.

Harry stumbled into the common room, stifling a yawn. The lesson had gone on longer than usual and most of the other students were in bed. There were only two left: Hermione and Ron, who were still up waiting for him. They both hid books as Harry collapsed into a chair near them.

They had been doing it since they found out about Harry's cancer. Harry knew they were trying to find anything to help. He had tried to tell them that he'd been through all of the books they were looking through several times already and that there was nothing, but they obviously wouldn't believe it until they saw it.

A few days after they had returned from Beauxbatons, Harry had started getting random dizzy spells. They'd be walking to class or sitting around talking when Harry's vision would go whitish. He had to stay really still for a few seconds before it would return to normal. Days before, Harry had had a dizzy spell while he was walking from Divination and had begun swaying. Ron had held onto Harry's shoulders until he could see again and stopped swaying. Harry had insisted that it wasn't anything serious, but Ron had only frowned and later skipped dinner to go to the library. He had never seen his friend put so much fervor into researching something, though Harry already knew his friends would find nothing.

Harry didn't really understand why they attempted to hide it. Maybe they just didn't want to bring up the topic with Harry more than they had to. Or maybe they didn't want get his hopes up that they'd find something. Maybe he'd scolded them for being over-concerned one too many times. Either way, Harry had given up trying to make them give up, silently agreeing to ignore it. He secretly was touched that they seemed to care so much.

"Wow mate, you look wiped," Ron said bluntly.

"Thanks Ron," Harry murmured sarcastically.

“So, tell us about it,” said Ron.

“Better make it short so we don’t have to carry you up to your dorm,” Hermione added.

“I dueled each separately, then the three of them at once. Then I dueled Snape twice,” he murmured, his eyes resting closed.

“And you won?” Ron asked excitedly. Harry nodded.

“Except for the first time dueling the three professors at once. Lupin got me with a Leg-Locker.”

“Harry! You’re supposed to take it easy!” Hermione admonished.

“I’m fine, ‘Mione, really. Just tired.”

With his closed eyes, Harry missed the worried look that shot between his two friends.

“Well, mate, time for bed, I’d say. Let’s go,” Ron said standing up. Hermione gave him a thankful look.

“Mmm...s’okay. ‘M gonna sleep here tonight,” Harry mumbled.

“No way, Harry. Come on now, don’t make me levitate you,” Ron said, pulling on one of Harry’s limp arms.

Harry opened his eyes and let himself be pulled to his feet. “Fine, but only ‘cause I’m scared what would happen if you tried to levitate me.”

Ron made a face at Harry. The two boys said goodnight to Hermione and started up the stairs.

Somehow, Harry made it up to the fifth year boy’s dormitory with only the occasional push from Ron to keep him going. Harry stripped down to his boxers and climbed into bed, asleep before even hitting the pillow.

Dadaiiro: Wow!! You reviewed to every chapter in the last few days!! That's so exciting!! I loved seeing your reactions as you went along because I usually only get that from the reviewers I've had since the beginning. I'm figuring that most of your questions got answered as you went along. I'm worried about Harry too, I mean poor baby has a major stressful life!! (Course, I guess I helped make it that way huh? *evil laugh*) Even if it will only be a very short while, it means so much to Harry that Sirius is free! He knows now that he'll get to spend his last few weeks with someone who cares about him instead of the stupid Dursleys. About Kota talking with George... I'm putting up another vote/debate in a later chapter about something along that lines, so whenever I write IMPORTANT in my A/Ns at the top, read it so you know to vote!! Thank you for the wonderful reviews and I hope you enjoy the chapter!

Eowyn of Ithilien: OMG your review had me laughing sooooo hard I was crying! I'm glad you like the scene where Harry tells the Stensons about his magic. I'm rather fond of it myself because I can just picture the dropped jaws and wide eyes and wondering if somebody had spiked my drink! The 20's Charleston music at Beauxbatons is exactly along the lines of what I was thinking! I LUUURVED it!!! I still read your review and laugh my arse off!! Snape: glitter for all!! Can you imagine if he actually did that while he was drunk and then, when sober, was showed the moving pictures of it? I'd love to see his face then!!! LOL If you wrote fanfiction, I think I'd have a heart attack from laughing so hard.

Keronshara: Lol. Thank you so much for the mercy upon my future grandchildren. I'm slightly confused though. Do you like cliffies or no? I hope this update was quick enough as to not incur your wrath. I'm trying to improve the story so the updates are taking slightly longer than they used to. I hope this does not spark your rage. hehe

LizhowHP: Of course I'm going to work in the cancer thing!! Everyone seems very anxious for it, but just be patient, it'll all work in and soon. Well, join the vote/debate/advice reviewing for the "Should the Stensons know?" question! I'd love to know what you think!

Phoenix220: I have to intersperse some not so exciting chapters in here to make the exciting ones stand out. Lol. Also, even though Harry's life is very...intense, he does have some days off from the extreme excitement. For your Ch 13 question, the students didn't go home, they were sent to Beauxbatons in the middle of the night by train. You're right about not mentioning the cancer thing. I guess there's just not much else for them to say about it. Harry is still in contact with them using Hedwig and so I'm sure they've thanked him a million times and knowing Harry, he's begged them to stop thanking him. So modest. Excitement will return so read read read!!

Maximum Poofy-Queen of AU: Harry is just a stubborn boy who seems to be most content with keeping his problems to himself. Blame it on the upbringing I say! That would be a very depressing conversation. I wouldn't be looking forward to it either. Anyways, it'll be addressed soon enough. Loved hearing from you as always!!

Fantagal: I know! I was crying throughout the end of the 5th book! Of course, I love how on everyone just seems to ignore his death. We were just like, "We could acknowledge it, but we won't because we're in denial!" myself included of course!

SiRiUsLy ObSeSsed1: I love your pen-name!! I'm glad you like my punishment for the Dursleys. I thought it'd be so funny for Aunt Petunia to be at her little tea parties and trying to find a comfortable way to sit on her tail, and Uncle Vernon having to find excuses not to remove his hat at work, or ever. Lol. Harry has at best, to July. Hmm...wonder how that'll work out. *evil knowing grin*

Ambookworm247: Thank you for the review and the wonderful compliment! I hope you continue to read. There are definitely some more sad scenes and there are happy scenes too! Hope you liked the chappy!

Dark Peppermint: Yeah Dursley smackdown!! *Grabs a pot from own kitchen* Let's go!!

KaptainKangaroo: LOL! Evil plot to make me dance like a crazed lunatic. That evil plan is so awesome!! I'm glad you liked that line! It gives me a fun mental picture. Feel free to critique anything you

want! Yeah, Harry's having a little break now from the drama. Well, he still has to deal with Malfoy and school, but compared to other stuff, that's like a trip to a weekend resort with gorgeous topless men giving massages....oh wait, my fantasy not his. Hope you liked this chappy!

Jackie: I'm sorry to disappoint you 'bout the kidnapping and glad I made you feel special! Hehe. Hope you liked this chapter

Shdurrani: Thanks! I wasn't actually planning on doing Kota/George, just having her fancy him. But would you like that? It's given me an idea. Pay attention for the next vote topic which will be coming up within the next few chapters! Hope you liked this chapter!

Trapper's Girl: Thank you! I'm glad you like this story. I know, the updates are getting slightly longer apart, but I promise to never go over a week without an update unless some extreme circumstance comes up (kidnapping, explosions, having to go save the world again, you know those type of circumstances). There are quite a few chapters left actually. I'm not sure exactly how many since I keep adding stuff, but it's not going to come to an abrupt end or anything! Never fear!

Terence: #1 Story?? Really?? Aww, you make me feel all warm and fuzzy inside. Yes I've read the 5th book!! I went and got it at midnight! It's quite a funny story actually, with much getting lost, riding on top of cars, security guards, scary men, solitary unmarked vans, banging on doors, running around with quilts draped around our shoulders (it was so cold!) and writing "Hermione is Hot" on my best guy friend's arms! But that's a story for another time and I think you had to be there.

Lauren: Thanks! You'll have to see about the cancer issue! *grins knowingly* hope you liked the chappy!

Also thanks to crazyfanfictionfanatic, Englishgirl, Leigh, and Arctic Wolf2 for your wonderful reviews!

Author's Note: Hey everybody. Just so you know, I'm going to use an A-F grading system since the O.W.L. grading system is so confusing. Plus, I don't think they use it when not practicing for the O.W.L.s since Harry was unfamiliar with it in book five. This chapter is for Xirleb70 who wanted this chapter as a morale booster before first day of school. I feel your pain! School is starting so soon and summer seemed so short!! Ahh!! This chappy is for all the readers who have to start school soon! Thank you to all you wonderful reviewers and please continue!! It's 11 at night and I'm craving Chinese food! I always crave Chinese though. Cheers to Chinese food! Well, on with the story!

"Harry! Harry!"

He turned around to see Eloise bounding toward him with a huge grin on her face. She was skipping down the hall until she noticed the strange looks directed toward her. She bit her bottom lip to suppress a smile and bowed her head to avoid the raised eyebrows. When she got closer to Harry, she looked up with a grin and began skipping toward him again, wildly waving a piece of parchment in front of her.

"Hey Eloise, what's that?" he asked grinning at Eloise's obvious excitement.

She ended her skipping with a final hop, landing right in front of Harry. She looked as if she was trying to keep from hopping on the spot.

"This," she said, "is going to be enlarged and framed and hung above my bed."

Harry laughed and took the parchment that she was waving in front of his face. He recognized it as their latest potions test. She had gotten an A. There were only two wrong out of twenty-five problems. Harry's jaw dropped slightly and turned into a grin.

Hermione and Ron looked over Harry's shoulder.

"Merlin's beard," Ron gasped.

“Eloise,” Harry said through a huge smile, looking up from the test, “you—you got an A.”

“I know!” she squeaked. “It’s our study sessions! I finally understand this stuff! I just—I just can’t believe it. Snape handed me back the test with this weird suspicious look and I saw the grade and I kept staring at it until...”

“Hey polka-dots,” called a drawling voice. Eloise froze and the joy drained instantly from her face. “I heard you cheated on the last test.”

“I did not!” Eloise snapped at the approaching blonde.

“Bugger off Malfoy!” Ron spat.

“I can see that those spots on your face haven’t cleared up. Rather disgusting wouldn’t you say?”

Eloise pursed her lips and looked down dejectedly.

“Oi, shut your face you bloody ferret,” Ron growled.

“Malfoy, don’t you have something better to do, or is your life really just so pathetic that all you can do to amuse yourself is prance around and bother people?” Harry said coolly.

“Pathetic, Potter? Well, I guess we have different views of the word. What I would find pathetic would be two morons getting tutored by an even bigger moron in his worst subject and then having one of them almost wet herself when she has a burst of luck.”

“And what did you get you get on the test again?” Hermione asked. “A C was it? Just passing even with Snape giving you all the answers...you’re right, we do have different definitions of pathetic. At least the other houses earn their grades on their own.”

“At least I am passing,” he said, looking pointedly at Ron. Crabbe and Goyle sniggered behind their leader.

“Oh Malfoy, glad your two cronies find you so amusing. Did they forget about their own grades?” Harry asked cheekily. The two immediately ceased their laughter and glared at Harry.

“Well, I must say that I have far better things to do than have you lot waste my time,” sneered Malfoy. “I just wanted to tell little Midgen over here that I got a sweater covered in red polka dots for Christmas. I had to throw it away because it reminded me too much of her face and I thought I might be sick.” Malfoy looked satisfied as Eloise’s face grew red and tears began to drip from her eyes. “Well, good day,” he said with a wicked grin and marched away with Crabbe and Goyle.

“I—I have to go,” Eloise stammered before running off, burying her face in her hands.

“Eloise, wait!” called the trio, but she was already gone.

“Should we go after her?” Harry asked Hermione, who, being a girl, knew more about girls’ emotions than the two boys could ever hope to learn.

“No. Not right now. I think she needs some time alone,” Hermione sighed.

Harry looked sadly at his hand, which was still clutching Eloise’s test. She had completely forgotten about it. The three continued their walk out the door toward the greenhouses.

“Ugh! Why is Malfoy such a bloody bastard?” Ron asked, clenching his jaw. “I hope he gets eaten by one of Hagrid’s pets.”

“Maybe he’ll turn around one day,” Hermione said without much hope in her voice.

Ron snorted. “Yeah, I’m sure. Right after Harry and Snape become best mates.”

“Oh Snapey? He and I have been best mates forever, Ron! In fact, he just gave me some good hair advice the other day. He told me to

stick my head in a giant vat of grease and I'd look nearly as posh as he does!" Harry said in mock-seriousness. Ron laughed and Hermione rolled her eyes, but also gave an appreciative chuckle.

Harry immediately felt bad for the comment. Snape had helped him: kept his secret until it was no longer possible, helped him when he had been hurt the first time, saved his life the second time. Guilt clenched his stomach. He winced as Ron kept going with the joke.

Finally they reached the greenhouse. Harry carefully put Eloise's paper in his bag, careful not to crinkle the record of her monumental achievement. He pushed all his anger at Malfoy, sadness on Eloise's behalf, and guilt about his Snape comment, out of his mind as Professor Sprout began their lesson.

After classes, Harry brought his stuff up to his dorm, plopping his bag on his bed. He was about to leave when Kota's picture frame caught his eye. It was sitting on his nightstand as usual. The Muggle picture had fascinated a few of his roommates. They had wiggled their eyebrows asking who the girl was (except for Ron who knew that she was just a friend of Harry's). Harry rolled his eyes in return and insisted that she was more like a sister.

Now, the frame gave him an idea. Harry pulled out a piece of parchment and transfigured it into glass. He took out two more pieces and transfigured them into small panels of wood, cutting a rectangular hole in the middle of one. He smiled, pleased with himself for transfiguring the objects from slips of parchment, something he had just recently learned how to do.

He set down the full panel of wood on his bed. Then, he dug into his bag and removed Eloise's test, carefully setting it on top, followed by the pane of glass and the second panel with the hole in it. He sealed the seams and grinned. He had made a frame.

"Whatcha doing Harry?" asked Neville as he walked into the room, tossing his own bag onto his bed.

“Eloise got an A on Snape’s last test. Only two wrong! I’ve just finished framing it for her,” Harry explained with a smile. Neville walked over and looked at the test in awe.

“She only got two wrong!” he exclaimed after running his eyes over the paper.

“I know! Do you think she wants to hang it up? I don’t really know how to get it to stand up like my picture frame does,” Harry said, gesturing toward Kota’s Christmas present for him.

“Nah, she’ll want to hang it up. She can just cast a sticking spell on the back. She’ll love this,” he said with a smile. “Ooh, we should carve a message on the frame. You know, ‘Congratulations to the Vice President of the Hated By Snape Club’ or something.”

“Brilliant,” Harry said with a grin. He traced ‘Congratulations’ across the top with his wand, carving the word into the frame. On the bottom, he wrote “to the VP of the HBSC” since he couldn’t fit the whole thing. The two boys agreed it sounded more prestigious this way anyway. Neville flicked his wand and murmured a short charm. Now, the words glittered gold. Harry held the frame out at arm’s length so both boys could admire their handiwork. They both gave satisfied nods.

“One more thing,” Neville said, with a sly grin. He flipped the frame over and quickly carved something into the back. He held it up for Harry to read. The words “Smart Ass!!!” smiled back at him. Harry burst out laughing.

Neville ran and grabbed a day old copy of the Daily Prophet. They changed the color of the paper to red and wrapped up their gift as well as they could, sticking pieces of Spellotape all over.

The two brought the gift up to Hedwig with instructions to bring it to Eloise at breakfast the next day.

The next day, Harry was woken from his sleep by a fit of hacking coughs. He buried his face in his pillow to quiet them.

He felt absolutely miserable and the last thing he wanted to do was have Ron start the day in a worried state. Finally the coughs subsided and he raised his head from the pillow. He fought off a dizzy spell only for it to turn into a pounding headache.

‘This is going to be a bad day,’ he thought to himself. Something brightly- colored on his bed caught his attention. He looked over to find that it was blood covering his pillow. He lifted his fingers to the side of his mouth and drew them away to find them sticky with blood.

‘This can’t be good.’ Harry reached down to touch his pillow, to assure himself that it was real. He drew his fingers across the red and then jumped back in surprise. The part he had just passed his hand over was once again white, clean from the blood. He slowly waved his hand over the rest of it, clearing away all of the blood. He stumbled into the bathroom and looked at himself in the mirror. He followed the same procedure on the sleeve of his pajamas where he had been coughing into at one point.

All of a sudden, he leaned into the sink and was sick, emptying his stomach of all contents. Finally, he rose, gasping for breath and clutching his stomach. He rinsed out his mouth to rid the nasty taste. Another dizzy spell swept over him and he had to grasp the sink for support.

‘This is definitely going to be a bad day.’

He heard the guys in the dorm begin to stir. He quickly splashed some cold water on his face, dried off, and went back to get dressed for school.

He entered the room to find all the guys trying to wake Dean who refused to get up. They had potions first after all. Ron looked over at him with a questioning glance.

“Hey Harry, where were you?” he asked suspiciously. Harry plastered a grin on his face.

“I figured this dorm only needs one person to wake out of a coma each morning.” He gestured toward Dean who was swatting away

the pillow that Seamus was hitting him with. "I got up early to save you all the trouble." This seemed to satisfy Ron.

Finally, after pouring a pitcher of water on Dean's face, ("You guys are going to pay for that!") all the fifth year Gryffindor boys made their way down to the Great Hall for breakfast. The whole time Harry just stared at his food. For the moment, he thought that if he ever ate again it would be too soon. He pretended instead to be engrossed in studying his Potions textbook, trying to drown out his bickering friends.

"I don't care, Ron! You shouldn't badmouth professors," Hermione scolded.

"Mione, come on. We all know Snape's an oily, slimy git. He's prejudice toward our whole house! And you know how much he picks on Harry. There's just no defending the guy!" Ron said back in an angry whisper.

"Snape's not all that bad," Harry muttered. The fighting instantly ceased and Ron dropped the roll he was holding. Their faces were so filled with shock Harry almost laughed. Hermione slapped her hand to Harry's forehead, which he swatted away.

"I'm not sick, Hermione. I just don't think he's as bad this year."

"Harry, he gave you detention for sneezing," Ron reminded him.

"Yeah, well that was months ago. I think he's gotten better."

"But you were making fun of him just yesterday. What's with the sudden change?" Ron asked incredulously.

"Yeah, I really shouldn't have said that thing about the hair. I don't think he's a bad guy," Harry insisted.

"First you're helping Slytherins, now you're defending Snape? Next thing we know you'll be wearing silver and green!"

Harry lowered his voice. "Listen, it's just...he's doing the spying for Dumbledore, which has to be really dangerous, and we're talking bad

about him behind his back? Maybe we just shouldn't make fun of him any more, you know?"

Ron looked at him with an expression that clearly stated that he believed his friend had lost his mind.

"Se...see Ron? Harry's...er...right, we need to stop all...that," she said with a firm nod at the end, yet she still seemed surprised and kept shooting worried glances at him. "Harry, aren't you going to eat anything?" she asked worriedly looking at his plate. He sighed.

"Not right now."

Ron and Hermione shot each other worried glances, but Harry could do nothing to ease their suspicions.

"Don't worry guys, I'll eat at lunch, just not now. And I can see all those looks you two keep giving each other. I'm not blind you know." Ron smiled and gestured to Harry's glasses. "Well, not totally blind," he laughed.

Suddenly, owls came soaring in through the windows. It was mail time. Neville, who was sitting a few seats away, caught Harry's eye and grinned excitedly. Harry saw Hedwig fly in over his head toward the Hufflepuff table.

"Where's Hedwig going?" Hermione asked curiously.

"She's delivering a present," he said, turning around in his seat to watch the scene.

Eloise, who had been staring off into space, was jolted awake as the snowy white owl landed in front of her. She looked confused, but began unwrapping the present anyway. She looked at it for a few seconds and her lips turned upwards into a huge smile. She turned it over curiously and burst out laughing at the message on the back. She looked over to the Gryffindor table. Neville and Harry waved at her with identical grins. Eloise gave Hedwig a piece of toast, which she quickly ate before flying over to Harry, stealing a strip of bacon from his plate. Eloise mouthed, "Thank you," across the hall.

Finally breakfast was over and they made their way out of the Great Hall. Harry definitely wasn't feeling well. Eloise came bounding up and gave him a quick thankful hug, saying she'd hang it above her bed, before going off to thank Neville.

Harry smiled at her happiness, but the simple hug had almost made his legs give out, since they felt weak and wobbly. Hermione noticed something in Harry's expression and asked if he was okay. Harry just rolled his eyes and said he was fine. Hermione looked slightly skeptical but dropped the matter as they started off toward the dungeons.

Harry hid it well, but on the way down, he kept feeling like the whole floor was swaying, as if he were on a rocky boat. He stumbled a few times but passed it off as having tripped over something, pointedly looking back as if looking for what he had tripped on.

When he got to Potions, he collapsed into his seat and concentrated on making the room stay steady. Luckily, that day they were making a potion dealing with medicine, one that cleared up bruises, one that Harry was familiar with. From all of his studying magical medicine, he was pretty good at anything to do with it, including making this particular potion. All he had to focus on was not knocking his cauldron over and cutting his ingredients up properly.

Halfway through class, Neville's potion exploded, covering his arm. Dark purple bruises sprang up in the places that each drop hit.

"Your stupidity never ceases to amaze me, Mr. Longbottom. Clean up this mess and then run along to Hospital Wing where Madam Pomfrey can once again fix your idiotic mistake," Snape sneered.

As Neville wiped up his potion, whimpering because of the bruises on his arms, Ron leaned over to Harry and whispered, "And to think you were actually defending Snape at breakfast. Yeah, Harry, he's a really decent guy."

Harry just shrugged, neither boy noticing that Snape had been walking quietly behind them. He stilled at Ron's comment and

glanced curiously at the back of Harry's head, picking up on the small shrug. He quickly resumed walking with a stony expression so no one would know he had heard.

Finally, Harry had finished his potion, which was accurately made. The three began walking toward the Transfiguration room. Hermione and Ron were a bit ahead of Harry, bickering over when to study for O.W.L.s, something Hermione had begun to do in her first year. They didn't notice their friend falling behind slightly, wincing in pain and rubbing his temples to try and soothe the pounding headache.

Harry was feeling worse and worse by the second. He coughed into his hand only to find more blood. His vision kept going blurry and refocusing. He felt his whole body weaken with each step he took.

He coughed loudly, eyebrows knotted in pain. His books slipped out of his arms and clattered on the ground. Ron and Hermione whipped around to find their friend a few steps behind them, doubled over slightly in pain.

"Harry? Are you all right?" Ron asked, panicking upon seeing his friend in obvious pain.

Harry shook his head from side to side in realizing that he wasn't going to make it to Transfiguration. This really frightened his friends. They always just received an annoyed "I'm fine" from Harry and knew this must be serious. They began walking over when Harry felt his legs giving out.

"Harry!" Hermione screamed as the two began to race to Harry's side. He was lying on his back and taking very shallow breaths. He was suddenly overcome with cold and began shivering while he felt beads of sweat forming on his face.

"Harry, oh Merlin, HARRY!" Ron was calling and shaking his shoulders. Harry tried to answer him but it just came out as a groan.

"Ron, go get a professor. You're faster than I am. Snape's closest," Hermione ordered as she began feeling Harry's forehead. Harry was surprised that Ron jumped up without protest of returning to the

dungeons and took off at full speed toward the classroom of his most hated professor.

Hermione looked down at him worriedly and began smoothing his hair back from his face, not knowing what else to do.

“C-cold,” Harry gasped. “I’m so cold.” He hadn’t meant for the words to escape but he was finding he was losing control of his mouth. Hermione whipped off her cloak and laid it on top of him chanting, “It’ll be all right, Harry. Help is on the way. You’ll be all right.”

Harry’s mind was getting clouded and everything became very confusing.

‘Why am I on the floor?’ he thought. ‘Who’s this girl and where are Ron and Hermione?’ He decided to voice his questions.

“Where are Ron and ‘Mione? Are they okay?” he asked the girl weakly. He was sorry when the girl burst into tears.

“I’m here, Harry. It’s Hermione. Ron’s getting help right now. We’re both fine,” she said smoothing his hair back again.

“Oh good,” he muttered calming down. Then his eyebrows knitted in confusion. “Hermione? Ron?” he called out, making the girl sob.

“Harry, I’m right here. It’s ‘Mione,” she repeated.

“Why am I on the floor?” he asked. Hermione smiled sadly.

“You’re sick, Harry, but help is on the way.”

“Tell Ron and Hermione I’m sorry,” he instructed the girl.

“It’s Hermione, Harry, I’m here. Why are you sorry?”

Harry tried focusing on her face but failed to. He opened his mouth to speak but was overcome with coughs that racked his entire body. He drew an arm to his mouth as a reflex to cough into his sleeve. When

the coughing subsided, he let his arm drop back down to his side. Hermione gasped in seeing the blood.

"Mione? You still there?" Harry asked in a whisper.

"Yes, Harry, I'm still here," she responded patting his clean hand in reassurance.

"Where are my glasses? I need them. I can't see," he explained.

"You're wearing your glasses, Harry," she said wiping away another tear.

"Hmm..." Harry paused letting this sink into his clouded mind. "That's not good then." He felt very dizzy and let his eyes close. He was soon engulfed in darkness.

Hermione watched her best friend's body go limp and began calling his name desperately. When she didn't get any response, she laid her head on his chest and cried into his robes, her only comfort coming from each rise and fall of his chest, however ragged it may have been.

A/N: Ooh, cliffy. Sort of. Anyways, next chapter is my favorite!! Thank you to all that reviewed! Please do it again! It makes me sooo happy to read your guys thoughts!!

Eowyn of Ithilien: Ah my favorite reviewer! I hope you realize I absolutely adore your reviews. I printed out the last few and keep them near my computer for the occasional laugh or ego massaging. I'm glad you like dueling so much since there is quite a bit of it in my story. Thank you for the Malfoy bit. I always thought it was funny he never says anything about Harry's clothes if they're so bad. That's the wonderful part about being a fanfic author I guess!! I get to write all the parts I want to see!! All right, you and the other reviewers have convinced me that the Stensons will know. How? Well I'm not

quite sure yet, but I have an idea I hope will work okay. I must say I'm surprised at the reaction! I thought everyone would say, "Enough with the bloody random characters!" but I guess I was wrong! Thank you so much for the compliment about handling reviewers! I never even thought of it really? I figure if someone takes the time to give me their review, then their opinion is worth their weight in gold. I've gotten some wonderful advice, great ideas, and a chance to justify my mistakes (meaning I get to make up random excuses and fun long explanations to explain them away. Lol) You're such a great reviewer. Thank you for the advice and encouragement and, of course, the laughs!! Snape...drunk...glitter...it's gold. I love it!

Dadaiiro: Definitely. I think the cancer has sort of changed his views on things. In knowing he doesn't have much time left, each day is becoming more valuable to him. He's reassessed his priorities. He's, like you said, more sensitive to other's feelings, especially their troubles. Yeah, poor Snape's confused. He wants to hate Harry, but he's having a difficult time. There were a ton of people at Hogwarts after Voldie's attack and any one of them could have seen him and mentioned it to his father or something. These things always seem to make their way through the grapevine to the people who you'd like least to know about it. Let's just hope that he doesn't just faint in a corridor or something. Lol. When I read that I laughed because, as you can see, you pretty much hit the nail on the head! Interesting ideas for telling the Stensons. I'm not sure exactly how I'm going to do that, but I like the Ron idea. Hmm...we shall see. I'm so happy you enjoy my story!

Maximum Poofy-Queen of AU: Ooh, you adored it to death? That sounds like my feelings about Harry, I love him so much I just have to make his life miserable. Lol. Poor guy. I'm glad you like dueling. I do too! I love the dueling scene in the second movie! But I felt soo bad for Draco when Snape picked him back up so roughly and just tossed him back in! I'm adding another dueling lesson with Snape scene since it's fun. Any suggestions? Hope you liked the chappy!

TheEverFalling: Thank you so much for all your emails. I always forget to mention you down here since I usually reference the review board, but I really appreciate your reviews! Yes, Harry's cancer is getting worse as you can see in this chappy! The letter idea is great.

It would be good in so many ways, but I think I've already figured out how they will find out. Oh but wouldn't a goodbye letter be so wonderfully sad. (I love sad stuff as you will see in the next chapter.) I don't think it will fit into this fic for many reasons that you will one day find out, but it was a great idea anyways!

Srialb: Thank you for such a wonderful complement! That's my main goal with this story. To keep people guessing and then surprising them all. I love hearing people's guesses! Everyone's so creative and it's so fun to hear their ideas. Sometimes I can even incorporate them into the story and if not, I can enjoy thinking of how I would write their version. I'm always worried about Harry, but I'm sure you're even more worried wondering what I'm going to do to him! LOL.

Luinlothana: Thank you! Hmm...now that you mention, I think maybe I was subconsciously inspired in some part by that movie! I had totally forgotten about it, but I must say I loved it. It didn't influence this story as much as it did my desire to learn foreign languages and Morse code though! I can't really remember that movie all that well, but I remember the Morse code thing. And didn't he detect earthquakes? That was cool. I really liked what you said about him sacrificing himself to give them back happiness. Though they will be finding out, I think I will use that line if you don't mind! It's so perfect! Harry won't be telling them for that exact reason, but they will find out some other way. For your endings, I can't say anything except I like them! Stupid ideas can turn into fun fics after all. I can't tell you about the ending because that would ruin the surprise! (Remember, I've already written it! But I love the guesses!) I can't believe you read this whole thing in 4 hours! That's dedication! It makes me so happy! Don't worry about not reviewing along the way, I'm glad you're doing it now! Hope you liked the chapter and hope to hear from you again!

SiRiUsLy ObSeSsEd1: Once again, am in love with your penname. Hmm...très interressant suggestion for the Stensons finding out. A possibility I will definitely keep in mind as I try to figure out this scene.

Joe: I really like your idea for letting the Stensons know. Keep an eye out and your idea just might be the inspiration for the scene! I know, powerful Harry rules, especially since he's so innocent about it.

Ratgirl: You'll find out soon! *Wink* I agree that Harry wouldn't tell the Stensons, but they'll be finding out some other way.

LizhowHP: oooh, I'm glad you like the dramatics because there will be some real doozies in here for you! I think you'll like the next chapter. Very angsty. I'd love to know what you think, despite the emotional scarring! Lol. You've convinced me. They'll know. And just for you, I'm going to make it as dramatic as possible.

Englishgirl: The Stensons will find out. I liked the weepy deathbed thing, but I think they'll find out a little sooner than that point, if there is that point. Ooh what a mystery!!

Xirleb70: Your wish is my command. Lol. Hey, I'm open to requests so here you go. Before the 19th just for you. I'm scared for school too. How I wish I could just go to Hogwarts instead of Muggle school, but hey, don't we all? Hope you liked the chapter!

Blackenedsoul: Wow, the Blackenedsoul? I know you did a fic on cancer. I remember it! I was reading it sooo long ago! I loved it! I left off at Hermione giving Harry a bear hug out at the car. I never knew you finished it!! Oh I'm sooo going back and reading it!! I also loved Crimson Tears. I'm not sure if I ever reviewed or not! Oh jeez, if I didn't (since I used to be a prat like that before I became an author and realized how much they're valued) then let me tell you that it was sooo great! I'm very honored to get a review from you and hope you continue to read my humble fic. Hehehe.

Ueshiba: Yeah, he does seem to have a hero thing, but that's what makes him so great! He always risks his life for others without thinking of himself. Pay attention to what Ron says in the next chappy on this subject! I hope you continue to read and review!!

Terence: Ah, midnight HP book 5 parties. What wonderful memories. Hope you liked the chapter!! Tell your pet egg I said Hi! Lol. I love how your enthusiasm for my story grows in ten seconds. YAY!

ShadowHunter1: Ooh, a new reviewer! I'm glad you enjoy the story. I've decided to tell the Stensons, and I hope it won't be awkward to

read. I'll let you be the judge of that though! Please continue to read and review!

Ambookworm247: I know I'm evil. Harry can testify to that. Muahahahaha.

Thank you also to Phoenix220, Rain Warrior, and GrimmyD.

Author's Note: wow 205 reviews!! Thank you so much!! I treated myself to a tin of chocolate mints which I love! (They are so good!) 'Course after eating it all and dancing around my room in celebration, I felt sort of sick. Chocolate mints and burrito don't mix well together when shaken up, I have now discovered. I'm currently listening to Disney songs on my boombox named Louise. Louise is very temperamental and sensitive (she stops playing if you tap a finger on her.) She's crippled (broken antennae and "next song" button). When I get frustrated with her, I shout "Jeez Louise!" It's quite fun. Anyways, thank you so much to all the reviewers. Please do it again because it makes my day and gives me motivation! I hope you all enjoy this chapter! Oh yeah. Today I found out that I got the science teacher from hell. Think Snape's attitude toward students, but totally incompetent. Please, make me feel better and review!

Snape was putting away potion ingredients when the youngest Weasley boy burst into the classroom frantically. Snape was about to make a scathing remark toward the boy, but stopped himself when he saw the extremely alarmed look on the redhead's face.

"Professor, please, it's Harry! Please, he needs help, now!" he pleaded with the Potions professor. Snape nodded worriedly and began to run after Ron through the halls.

"What happened, Mr. Weasley?" he demanded as they jogged along.

"He-he just collapsed. He's sick, really sick."

They finally approached an unconscious Harry Potter with Hermione Granger sobbing into his chest. Ron ran up next to Hermione, catching her attention. Snape quickly knelt by Harry and Hermione backed away a bit. Snape checked the boy's vitals: shallow breathing, weak pulse, his lips were turning slightly blue. His skin was clammy, but his forehead was burning.

"Tell me what you know," he ordered.

"He has cancer," Ron said staring in fright at his friend. Snape paused for a moment.

"The Muggle illness?"

Ron nodded. Snape shook his head.

"Impossible, Weasley."

"Trust me. He did a weird spell, I'll explain later. He's had it since winter break. He just recently told us."

"Has something like this happened before?" asked Snape.

"No, he's had a few weak days and occasionally a loss of appetite, but nothing else," Hermione said. Her eyes grew wide. "Except on the day he came back from winter holiday. He was throwing up blood. He said it was just a cold, but..." She trailed off wondering why she hadn't made the connection sooner. "And then today, when we were going to our next class, he just collapsed. He was shivering but his forehead was burning. He was really out of it, not even recognizing me. Then he said he couldn't see and lost consciousness. Is he going to be okay Professor?" Hermione asked wiping away tears.

"I don't know. All right Weasley, go down to my supplies and get Powdered Hornblende, Naive, Inimativ, er...some Cocorico and Rakshasa tail. Granger, go get the headmaster. The password's Chocolate Frogs. Meet me at the Hospital Wing." The two Gryffindors nodded and tore off to carry out their assigned tasks. Snape looked back at Harry.

'How does he get into all the trouble?' he asked himself. He considered levitating the boy, but it was too slow. He put one arm under Harry's knees and the other under his back and lifted Harry into his arms. As he took off, jogging toward the infirmary, he got a sense of déjà vu. He shook his head. He was slightly unnerved to find himself feeling sympathy for the boy he had been bent on hating for years.

He passed a few students who looked shocked at the scene. The animosity between the potions master and Harry Potter was famous throughout the school. It was no wonder they were surprised to see Snape carrying the unconscious boy through the halls with an extremely worried look on his face that he tried to hide with the occasional menacing scowl that encouraged students to back away and not ask any questions.

After what seemed like far too long, he finally reached the Infirmary. He entered to find Madam Pomfrey checking over Neville Longbottom. She seemed to have cleared up the bruises from his earlier potions accident. Neville momentarily looked frightened at seeing Snape but then realized what he was carrying and his expression turned into one of concerned shock.

“Professor, what’s wrong with Harry? Is he all right?” he asked leaning forward and alerting Madam Pomfrey to Snape’s presence in the process.

“Oh dear, what now?” Madam Pomfrey asked jumping up as Snape laid Harry down on a nearby bed. She had decided long ago that she saw far too much of this particular boy. It just wasn’t fair.

Snape eyed Neville but decided that there wasn’t enough time to worry about him overhearing.

“Well Granger and Weasley said that he collapsed in the corridor. They say that he has cancer, something about a spell, but that’s impossible...” Snape was interrupted by a cry from Madam Pomfrey.

“No! He didn’t! He said it was for a class assignment!” she gasped. She raced over to Harry’s side and began checking him over.

“Wait, Poppy, there actually is a spell to give a wizard cancer? But why in the world would he do something like that?” he asked in disbelief.

“He must have known a Muggle with cancer. The only way to save them from it is to transfer it to a wizard. He basically traded his life for someone else’s,” she explained in a distraught voice.

Neville had risen out of bed and came to Harry's side. "What's cancer?" he asked frightened. Whatever it was, it sounded really bad.

"Stay out of this Longbottom, mind your own business," Snape barked. Neville flinched but didn't move.

"N-no sir. Harry's my friend and I-I'm not just going to stay out of this," he said looking the Potion's master straight in the face. For the first time ever, Snape felt a fleeting pang of respect for the boy he had always humiliated. He knew that Neville was terrified of him and was showing a great deal of loyalty and bravery.

'Perhaps the sorting hat didn't make a mistake,' he mused.

"N-now, I want to know what cancer is. Is Harry sick?" he asked stubbornly, his stuttering and slight shaking being the only things that portrayed his fright.

"Yes dear. Harry's sick. Very sick. Here." She ran into her office and brought out a book of Muggle illnesses and opened the page to "Cancer" and handed it to Neville. She just didn't have the heart to tell him herself.

Snape watched as his student read the pages. Neville's face grew quite pale.

"Is Harry's cancer terminal?" he asked pulling the word from the book.

"I'm afraid so, dear. The spell doesn't work on anything other type. I'm so sorry, honey," she said seeing the devastated look in the boy's eyes.

The three looked up when Ron burst through the door carrying all the flasks he had been assigned to find. He was out of breath and gasping for air but didn't seem to notice. He set the bottles down on a table and walked over to Harry's bedside. Neville pulled up a chair for him and then got one for himself.

"How's he doing? Is he going to be okay?" Ron asked with pleading eyes.

"I don't know, dear. It'll be close, but Professor Snape and I are going to make a potion that will hopefully help him. We're going to do the best we can but you must understand that we're not familiar with this," Madam Pomfrey said regretfully. She hated saying those words, but she didn't want to lie to the boy or let him get his hopes up.

Madam Pomfrey and Snape began working together with the ingredients.

"You know." Ron said to Neville, not taking his eyes off Harry. It wasn't a question. Neville numbly nodded his head.

"He's dying," Ron stated. Once again, a nod from Neville. Ron took Harry's hand in his own. "Hey mate," he said in a near whisper. "You have to pull out of this, okay? It's not time for you to go yet. It's even earlier than the too early I was planning on and you can't do that to me, all right?"

"Yeah, Harry. You have a Quidditch cup to win, not to mention the house cup. We can't do it without you. I still need you to be with me in Snape's class. I need to have my co-president in the 'Hated by Snape' club," Neville added quietly. Under any other circumstance, he would have kicked himself as Snape stilled momentarily, but currently took no notice. Neville had forgotten the professor was there and he had obviously heard. However, the potions master didn't acknowledge it and continued to help Madam Pomfrey.

Hermione burst into the room followed by Dumbledore. She flew to Harry's side, silent tears still dripping down her face. She took Harry's other hand and began petting it.

The three adults talked quietly while Snape and Madam Pomfrey continued to brew potions. Finally, the students had to back away from their friend's side, all sitting on the next bed over to make sure they were out of the way. Madam Pomfrey attempted to wake Harry to no avail. She quickly checked his vitals again.

"His pulse is extremely weak. We're going to have to inject these potions into his system for him to stand a chance. It won't be as quick or effective as ingesting them, but it's our only hope." She glanced up at the three students solemnly. "Maybe you three should wait outside."

"No, I'm not leaving him," Ron said firmly.

"I'm staying," Hermione sobbed.

"Same here," said Neville in a decisive voice, slightly shaken with grief.

Madam Pomfrey frowned but it was obvious that she had bigger problems than trying to get the three students to leave. She just sighed and gave up.

Snape measured out a greenish potion in a syringe. He tapped it to get rid of any air bubbles and handed it to Madam Pomfrey. Ron winced as the medi-witch injected it into Harry's arm.

"Breathing's still shallow, we're still going to need something to support him with that," she called to Snape who handed her a shot a few seconds later with a bluish liquid inside. They injected several potions into Harry's arm. Ron had his arm around Hermione who was crying into his shoulder while Neville sat with his head in his hands.

Madam Pomfrey grasped Harry's wrist again. She then placed her hand on his chest and put her ear near his mouth.

"His breathing is slowing and his pulse is weakening. The potions haven't taken affect yet and won't for a few minutes. Severus, a cold wet cloth please. We need to stop that temperature from getting any higher. Albus, I need your help with the Vitas spell," Madam Pomfrey ordered.

Snape ran to get a wet cloth and Dumbledore joined Madam Pomfrey at Harry's side. With the headmaster closer to them, the three students could see the solemn expression on his face, not even the

slightest twinkle in his eye. They began rattling off incantations. Snape quickly assisted them after placing a wet rag on Harry's forehead. It was a chaotic scene. Madam Pomfrey was barking out names of spells that Snape and Dumbledore took turns in performing while the medi-witch was checking Harry's vitals and thumbing through pages of books.

Meanwhile the three students sat sobbing in near panic, each with tears trickling down their faces. Oddly, the only one who looked peaceful was the unconscious form of Harry. If it weren't for his slightly blue lips, shallow breathing, and the drops of perspiration on his face, he would have looked just like he was sleeping. This picture made Ron pray that this was all a dream and that his best friend really was just asleep in the next bed.

Finally, Madam Pomfrey paused a long time in her commands, checking Harry over. Everyone held his or her breath.

"Okay, it seems the potions have begun to take affect. His pulse and breathing are normal." The medi-witch collapsed into a chair near the next bed and began fanning herself. Dumbledore and Snape stepped aside to converse.

The three students swarmed around Harry's bed. Hermione and Ron once again grasped Harry's hands. Hermione and Neville looked extremely relieved, but Ron retained a vacant, lost expression that Neville couldn't help but notice.

"Hey, Ron, are you all right?" he asked cautiously.

Ron looked up with a slightly lost expression. He was silent for a long time before speaking quietly.

"I just can't help but think that this isn't over, you know? We saved today, but what about next time? One of these times, we won't be able to bring him back. I think this is the first time it's really hit me. I can't really explain it, but it never felt real before. And how do we know if we really have saved him? What if he doesn't wake up, or does but isn't himself? Like messed up in the head or something.

You said yourself, Hermione, that he was delusional in the hall. What if that's permanent?" he spilled out.

Hermione recalled the image of Harry lying on the ground without a clue to what was going on. The memory broke her heart and she couldn't bear the thought of Harry remaining that way.

"I can't believe this is happening," Neville said quietly. "Harry has always just been a constant, you know? I just assumed he'd always be there in the dorm, sticking up for me in Potions or with Malfoy, saving the school from the next big disaster, and just being...well...Harry."

"I feel the same way, Neville," Hermione said with a sad glance at her friend. "I just always took it for granted that he'd always be there because he's Harry and he always beats the bad guy. He always survives." Her voice broke. "But I just don't see how he can escape this one." She gulped back a few tears.

Suddenly, Hermione felt Harry's hand move. She looked up to see him stirring.

"Guys, I think he's waking up."

Harry's eyes fluttered open. They remained half-closed with exhaustion but noticed his three friends.

"Mione? Ron? Neville?" he murmured weakly.

"Hey there, Harry," Hermione said quietly.

"What happened?" he asked groggily.

"You collapsed, remember?" she continued.

"Oh," he murmured. He winced as he coughs racked his body momentarily. When it was over he drew in some shaky breaths. It was obviously a difficult task for him. "I'm sorry if I scared you guys," he whispered, eyes drifting closed.

"It's okay, Harry, just get some rest," Hermione said tenderly, caressing his hand.

Harry nodded slightly before drifting into slumber.

Madam Pomfrey agreed to allow the three to stay the night at Harry's side. Since nobody else was in the infirmary, she transfigured one of the beds into a couch, which she placed at the side of Harry's bed.

The three eventually fell asleep. If anyone were to have seen them, they would have seen Neville curled up at one side, head resting on the armrest. Ron was using the opposite armrest as a pillow, but was more stretched out than Neville. Hermione, was squeezed in next to him, using his chest as her pillow.

In the middle of the night, Harry woke to see this scene and just watched amusedly for awhile before Neville woke and saw him.

"Hey, mate," he whispered.

"Hey," Harry whispered back. "Look at those two. And they won't acknowledge that they like each other."

Neville shot him a mischievous grin. "Then I wonder what they'd think of their sleeping arrangements. I'm pretty sure they didn't fall asleep that way."

Harry grinned. "Do it."

"Ron, Hermione! Harry's awake!" he exclaimed quietly shaking them both.

Both pairs of eyes opened. Ron and Hermione looked over to Harry to find that he was indeed awake and with an amused smile on his face. Ron looked down as Hermione looked up and their eyes met. Both their faces reddened. Hermione shot off of Ron, murmuring an embarrassed apology.

"Hey guys," Harry whispered, unable to talk louder. "Good to see you."

Hermione leaned in closely. "Harry, do you recognize us?" Harry looked slightly confused at the question but his nod alleviated Hermione's worries.

"Yes, I recognize you, 'Mione. Neville, how are your bruises?" he asked. Neville laughed and showed him his healed arms. Harry then looked at Ron. "Are you all right Ron?" He had noticed the pale color of his friend's face.

Before Ron could answer, Madam Pomphrey came bustling over.

"Oh good, dear, you're awake. How are you feeling?"

"Fine," he murmured.

"Sure you are. Hold on now, I'm going to alert the Headmaster that you're awake." She stepped into her office and came out followed by Professor Dumbledore and Snape, who had presumably come through the fireplace in Madam Pomfrey's office. The three approached Harry, who squirmed slightly, knowing what was coming.

"Mr. Potter, please tell me you didn't actually use that spell I gave you," Madam Pomfrey said desperately, starting the dreaded conversation.

"Sorry," Harry muttered. In normal circumstances, he would have been sputtering random words to avoid the question, but he was too tired to give it the effort.

"But I thought I made myself clear that you can't survive this!" she exclaimed, exasperated.

"You did ma'am, I knew what I was doing and the consequences as well."

"But that potion, it's too difficult; where would you get the ingredients?" Harry looked down at his lap with a guilty expression. Now that he was being interrogated about his guilt, he began to feel more awake.

"Potter," Snape growled.

"Oops?" he said with a sheepish grin. The Potions master had apparently noticed the ingredients missing from his office.

"Harry," Dumbledore stepped forward looking extremely somber. "How long have you had this?"

"Winter break, sir. Er...the night before we got back."

Those words triggered a memory for Snape. He remembered Harry's words from his office that night. I was visiting someone in the hospital...it was urgent so I waited until the Dursleys were asleep, sneaked out and ran to the hospital. So that's what he had been doing. He had been sacrificing his own life for another's and was beaten to a pulp for doing so.

"And how long do you have?"

"Well, Mr. Stenson had it for about three months before he was diagnosed, so I'd say July. Probably before my next birthday," he added looking away. He heard Madam Pomfrey and Neville gasp. Hermione patted his hand for comfort. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Professor Snape's mouth drop open and Dumbledore close his eyes.

"And this is why your powers have suddenly increased?"

"Yes sir."

"Who else knows about this?" Dumbledore asked calmly, yet a trace of despair tinted his voice.

"Er...well, everyone here."

"You haven't told the Stensons?" he asked with a raised eyebrow. Harry felt a pang of guilt.

"Not exactly, sir. They wouldn't handle it very well."

“Don’t you think they’d like to know?” he asked gently.

“No. Look, I did this to give them happiness. If I told them, it would ruin that,” he explained, pleading for understanding.

“I take it Sirius is in the dark as well?”

Harry nodded ashamed. It looked like the exposing of his secrets was hurting more people than he would have hoped.

“Don’t you think he has the right to know?”

Harry nodded weakly. “He’s going to kill me.”

“Well, Mr. Potter, I can assure you that if you don’t let him know, this secret of yours will end up killing him.”

Harry nodded.

“Albus, a few students saw Potter when I was carrying him here.” Harry blushed at this information. He now knew that the teacher who hated him had carried him in his arms twice. Harry felt embarrassed in knowing that somebody had witnessed him in such a weak and vulnerable state multiple times, especially since it was Snape.

“Please, I don’t want everyone to know,” Harry begged. Dumbledore nodded.

“Yes, I agree. We wouldn’t want this information to fall into the wrong hands. Well then, I’m going to owl Sirius and tell him there’s something you need to talk to him about, as it’s not my place to tell him this.” Dumbledore paused to thoughtfully glance at Ron. “Everyone else should also be leaving now; Mr. Weasley and Mr. Potter need to talk.”

Harry glanced up at Ron who was wearing a blank expression, looking at Dumbledore but not really seeing. Snape left, robes billowing behind him. Madam Pomfrey left a vial of Dreamless Sleeping Potion on the nightstand with instructions for Harry to take it

when he was done. Hermione kissed his forehead and instructed him to get some rest before leaving with a visibly shaken Neville who gave Harry a weak smile. The door clicked closed behind them. Now the only light in the room came from the bright moon outside the window, falling short of Harry's bed but giving an adequate amount of light to see. All the other beds were empty, which Harry was thankful for.

Harry scooted into the sitting position, leaning against the headboard for support.

Ron was now looking blankly down at his knees. Harry cautiously spoke.

"Ron, are you all right?"

Ron took a deep breath and looked up into Harry's eyes. Harry was shocked to see a few silent tears trickling down Ron's face. He had never seen his best friend cry.

"No Harry, I'm not all right. That was the scariest thing I've ever been through. I...I'm just realizing what it's going to be like to lose you," he began shakily. His voice began to rise as he choked down tears. "Merlin's beard, Harry, you're my best friend and you're going to be gone in a few months!" he practically screamed.

"Ron, I'm so sorry..."

"No. Don't. You're always sorry for everything like it's all your fault. I guess this time, you actually did cause this, but it's not like you wanted things to be like this..." he paused and eyed Harry suspiciously. "Right? You didn't do this because you wanted to die, right?"

Harry vigorously shook his head no.

"Of course not."

Ron closed his eyes and nodded. "Good." The two friends looked at each other in silence for a few moments before tears began flooding

out of Ron's eyes with a sob. "Harry, I don't want you to die! What am I going to do? Who's going to get in trouble with me? We were going to graduate together and I was going to brag to everyone that I knew Harry Potter, the famous Auror. I was going to get to see who you were going to marry and you were going to talk sense into me when I got into fights with whoever I was with. You were going to be the best man at my wedding if I get married one day, calming me down like you always do. I may not know where my life's going, but I used to know that you would always be there and so it didn't matter and everything would turn out all right. Damn it, Harry, YOU WERE GOING TO BE THERE!" he screamed tears streaming down his face. Harry felt the warm tears trickling down his own. Ron calmed down a little bit and in less of a scream, he continued. "You were going to be there, and now you're not, and now I don't know what I'm going to do."

"Ron I'm so sorry, I wanted to be there, I really did..."

"Then why the hell did you do this? No, don't answer that, I already know. You've always underestimated what you mean to other people and there's no way you could have known what you were doing to me and Hermione and Sirius, or you wouldn't have done it. But that doesn't make it hurt any less."

Harry didn't know what to say. What could he say? There was no way to assuage Ron's fears. He was going to die and he wouldn't be there for his best friend. He had wanted to die with no regrets but now knew that was impossible. Ron wiped away a few of his tears. He looked up at Harry and kept starting saying something and then stopping as if not sure how to say it.

"I...What do you...What can I do for you...after?" he asked after a long silence.

"Huh?"

"I'm sitting here having a fit when you're the one who should be screaming and ranting. But...I don't know...I need something to do for you after...July. I just need to know I'm doing something for you

when you're not here to do it for yourself. Do you know what I mean?" Ron asked sniffing.

Though his words were somewhat confusing, Harry knew what he was asking for: a last wish. So if something happened so that Harry was never able to demand a last favor on his deathbed, Ron wouldn't live wondering if he could be doing something more to honor the memory of his friend.

Harry stared at the triangle of moonlight on the next bed over, thinking about the question. He knew he wanted to just ask that Ron made sure that Sirius and Hermione were okay, but he knew that Ron didn't have to be asked to do that. Harry opened his mouth to say this wish.

"I just want to be remembered," he whispered without even knowing where it came from. Ron laughed through his tears.

"I don't think that will be a problem, you're in every history book made in the last fifteen years and the hero of the wizarding world."

"No. They'll remember The-Boy-Who-Lived, you and 'Mione are really the only ones who can remember me as just Harry. That's all I want."

Ron stared at Harry for a few moments before doing something Harry never expected. He threw his arms around Harry's neck and drew him into a hug. Harry was slightly stunned as Ron began weeping into his shoulder, but then hugged him back. It was then that he knew what he had truly given up: his best friend. It was the first time he had felt that someone truly cared about him. For the first time since they had known each other, they both dropped their macho exteriors. There was no one there to see except for each other.

"I'm so sorry Harry. I should have let you know what you were worth to me and 'Mione. I should have told you that you're the best friend I've ever had, but I never did. I should have told you that you're like a brother to me, even more so than my actual brothers. And now it's too late, I didn't tell you in time. I just always thought you knew," Ron sobbed.

"No, Ron, you've always been the best friend I could ever have. It's not your fault. Don't ever think this was your fault. Promise me that," Harry said through silent tears. Ron nodded and pulled away from Harry. He sat back in the chair and wiped at his tears. Harry leaned back against the headboard.

Ron reached over and grabbed the Dreamless Sleeping Potion and handed it to Harry. Harry looked at him confusedly.

"Take it. You need sleep and I know you won't get any if you don't take this tonight," he said wiping his eyes on his sleeve as if to try to erase the evidence of showing such a vulnerable emotion as grief. His puffy red eyes and the small occasional hiccuping breaths gave him away.

Harry smirked and took the vial. "What are you doing now, planning to take Madam Pomfrey's place?"

"Yeah right. Hermione said you need sleep and I do NOT want to mess with the wrath of Hermione," Ron smiled.

Harry laughed. "You don't want to mess with the wrath of Hermione? Why, lose interest in your favorite hobby?" he said in reference to their constant bickering.

"Hey, that girl gets more scary each year. I think we've had a bad influence on her."

"You don't seem to mind, though," Harry said slyly, grinning slightly. Ron paused trying to sort out the meaning of his words.

"Hey what exactly are you saying there, mate?"

"Oh nothing, I think it's time for me to go to bed now."

"Oh no you don't, you tell me what you mean!" he laughed. He reached for the vial to assert this point, but Harry just tipped it toward him in a mock toast, "Cheers," and then drank it down.

“Hey, unfair,” Ron laughed, gently taking the vial from Harry’s hand to place it back on the night table. “Tell me what you mean! And if you mean what I think you mean, that isn’t true!”

Harry sunk back down into a lying position. He could feel the potion taking effect.

“Sure,” he mumbled.

“All right, you go to sleep now, but I’m going to have some definite words for you in the morning,” Ron said seeing Harry’s eyes closing.

Ron thought that Harry was asleep a few seconds later and was surprised to hear him speak again.

“You know, it won’t be so bad. I’ll get to see my parents,” Harry murmured, half asleep.

Ron shut his eyes and took a deep breath. It always slipped his mind that Harry had no parents. “Yeah, you will,” he said lamely. He didn’t know what else to say but he wasn’t worried about his lame response since Harry was slipping into slumber.

“But Ron?” he whispered not fully conscious anymore.

“Yeah?”

“I’m going to miss you when I’m gone.”

When Harry’s breathing finally evened out, Ron gently grabbed his hand.

“Please get better,” he whispered to his unconscious friend. “Don’t leave, Harry. I need you with me to get me through so much more. Don’t leave me; you’re my best friend.”

Ron then curled up in his chair and watched his friend sleep, letting himself have a good cry thinking about the difficult road ahead.

A/N: I hope I didn't hype up this chapter too much, leading you all to disappointment. I don't really know why this is my fav chapter. Possibly because I just always like the cute friendship stuff. My friend had cancer and it was just really touching to see all his usually macho friends break down and cry or be emotionally supportive. Of course, he's in remission so yay!! Anywho, more reactions next! Please review!!! It makes my day!

Eowyn of Ithilien: Ooh, I hope it was a pretty crown! And a pretty room at the Looney Bin. Snape: a gay hairdresser? Now that is awesome. Have you ever seen the movie Blowdry? It has Alan Rickman (Snape) in it and he's a gay hairdresser!! It also has Josh Hartnett and Rachel Leigh Cook in it. When I saw it I almost had a heart attack! We were watching it and I suddenly shouted, "Holy fudgemonkeys, that's Snape!! And he's a blonde, gay hairdresser with a Scottish accent! Now we know what he does outside of Hogwarts!" Now that is gold. He also played a German terrorist in Die Hard 1. LOL. It's beautiful! Spaz attacks rock! Mine usually include running into a room to get something and then stopping with a confused look without the slightest clue what I was supposed to be getting. I hope you liked the chapter!!

Dadaiiro: No, he doesn't take Muggle Studies. I'm not going to delve too much into how Madam Pomfrey feels, but she does feel guilty about it. She doesn't show much emotion in this chapter because she strikes me as one of those, when it's serious, she gets down to business. She focuses only on what she has to do. I think many doctors (erm...healers I mean) have to do this in order to really help their patients. You can feel what's going on? That's the greatest compliment ever! It means I've achieved my ultimate goal in writing! Thank you!

Firemask: Don't worry about not reviewing for a while. I know how it is! I'm just glad you're reviewing now 'cause I thought I'd lost you! I'm so happy you like how the characters are acting and Snape's role. I hope to keep him involved and developing throughout the story. Hope you liked the chapter.

Maximum Poofy-Queen of AU: Makes absolute sense to me since I relate! Snape will continue to pop up in this fic. Next chapter, you will see his reaction. I hope I didn't hype up this chapter too much and lead to disappointment. I probably should never have said that. It's just that it made me cry when I was writing it because I had the scene envisioned in my head and it was so sad. I tried to portray it on paper, but I'm not sure it came out as touching as it was in my head. Oh well!

SiRiUsLy ObSeSsEd1: yup, I do love torturing my characters apparently. Makes for good drama. Of course if this happened in real life, I'd freak! If I was in Hermione or Ron's shoes, I don't know what I'd do. Probably strangle Harry for doing this. Snape's reaction is next chapter. Hoped you liked this one!

Trapper's Girl: Ooh good call on the Hospital Wing! Thank you so much for the enthusiastic compliments. Snape's reaction will be next chapter. Hope you liked this chappy!

Luinlothana: LOL yes, I'm sure he can predict earthquakes! Snape seems to overhear quite a few things in my story. This is something Snape couldn't really deal with on his own. I don't think he'll be keeping too many of Harry's secrets from Dumbledore after the last time. Ron bursting into Snape's office definitely doesn't seem like it would happen every day! Hope you liked this chapter!

Xirleb70: Thank you for the wonderful compliments! I space out and think about fanfiction stories (my own and others) all the time during school! I'm glad to see I'm not the only one. I always wonder what people who don't read fanfics do to keep their minds occupied since I'm always imagining endings to stories I'm reading or mentally write my own. Practically this entire fic was written in math and French classes. I hope school isn't too bad for you!

TheEverFalling: Wow, medication for heart attacks? That's so awesome! LOL I know! 205 reviews currently!! I'm so excited! When I saw how many reviews I got for this chapter, my jaw literally dropped opened and I made a sort of "EEP!" sound. Then I proceeded to dance around to my wonderful old rock and roll songs

and Motown songs! Thank you for the great reviews! Hope you liked this chappy!

Ambookworm: Trust me I'm a Harry basher fan to the core (as is probably obvious with this story. Poor Harry.) I don't think the delirium is a direct cause of cancer in real life, but it can happen with high fevers, which was sort of what I was trying to portray. I've never had it that bad, except for one time when I was sick and kept looking at my room and I couldn't recognize where I was. Apparently I had strange conversations with people too that I couldn't remember after my fever went down. Lol, well you'll know the ending one day. I'm sure you wouldn't want to know it now because then it would ruin the suspense!

Seaver99: Well, Madam Pomfrey, even though she's a wonderful healer, is really just a school nurse. I think cancer, even with a wizard, would be difficult to detect without either the symptoms showing or in depth tests, and even with those, cancer is so rare with wizards (in this story at least) that it would be near impossible to detect. They just wouldn't think to look for it! She's not giving Harry regular check ups and the last time she saw her was because of Uncle Vernon. She would have no reason to want to check for an illness. I really hope that explains it for you! Hope you are liking this story!

Ckat44: You were in tears by the end of last chapter? Wow, how did you fare in this one? I love that you are into the story enough to feel emotional about it! That's like me since I've written it. I'm so involved, I got really teary in writing many of the chapters (especially this one) because I imagine it as being so sad. I just hope I could convey that to others as well!

LizhowHP: Yes, dramatic all for you. But as appealing as the bowing down to me idea is, don't, just because I'd feel like Voldie or something!! Lol! Instead, just send me imaginary chocolate mints and Chinese food! Mmmm....

JaimeyKay: Thank you! I can't tell you the ending now! You'll just have to wait like everyone else except for me!! Muahahaha. Even my sister doesn't know. She's been begging me to tell her for ever,

but I'm only letting her read about one or two chapters ahead of you guys! Makes it more suspenseful!! LOL. I think I will keep your speaker since mine only works occasionally. It's really scary, all of a sudden it'll burst with a loud growl or hiss. It's possessed. The Stensons will find out later. I'm writing that right now and I hope it'll turn out well!

Terence: I'm glad your enthusiasm is growing rather than fading into nothingness! Maybe your pet egg can be friends with my boombox Louise. She's acting up right now, though. She kind of likes to piss people off (mainly me).

Phoenix220: Yeah, Malfoy certainly acts like a git. I have absolutely no clue on the amount of chapters. Right now, I'm about halfway through with what I have written so far, but because the motivation I'm getting from everyone's fantastic reviews, it seems to be growing. Wow, you have until October? You're so lucky!!

Fantagal: Well, he's still alive for now!! As for in the future, only time will tell! Muahahaha!!

Angel74: As you will see soon, Snape is mighty confused with how to feel. Thank you so much for adding it to your list of favorites! That means so much to me! Hope you liked this chappy!

o Hell o Kitty o: Why thank you!! Thank you so much!! I only hope you continue to think so highly of me and my story! But really thank you! That's so nice and it makes me feel so special!!

Blackenedsoul: You're welcome. You know you love the "cruel cliffies"

Jay-Jay: How? Because I'm evil! LoL! Thank you for the wonderful review! Hope you liked the chappy!

Thanks also to crazyfanfictionfanatic, Rain Warrior, Arctic Wolf2, Lauren, Leaps, and Joe. You guys rock!!

Author's Note: Wow, how quick is this chapter out? And it's the chappy you've all been waiting for...(drumroll)...Sirius's reaction!!! Hope you all like it!! This chapter is dedicated to Srialb—good luck in court. I just want to say how much I appreciate everyone's reviews. Each one of them means so much! Wow that sounded really corny, but hey, it's true. Everyone seems to have been waiting for Sirius's reaction so I'm really nervous about how you guys will like it. I hope the scene lives up to your expectations. Well, not much else to say so on with the story! Oh yeah, and review, review, review!!

* * * * *

Meanwhile, in Snape's private chambers, the potions master was pacing around his living room.

"Why is this happening?" he muttered to himself. There was a battle raging in his head. This was Harry Potter: the boy he had hated since the day they had set eyes on each other. He looked so much like his father, Snape's worst enemy in school. James Potter. The boy who had made his school days a living hell. And of course, his son just had to become the most famous wizard in Europe. Up until this year he had seen Harry as nothing but a new James, everybody praising the ground he walked on. The Quidditch star. The school hero. But now...

Now he knew that Pot...no Harry, was different than his father. He wasn't some pampered little prince who basked in the attention he received. Snape was finally acknowledging that Harry actually didn't like the attention. The Gryffindor Golden Boy had actually led a difficult life, which only seemed to grow more difficult by the day. The strangest thing of all was what he had heard the Weasley boy say.

"And to think you were actually defending Snape at breakfast. Yeah, Harry, he's a really decent guy."

Harry had defended him to his best friend? A best friend who hated the potions master? Had he really tried to convince his friends that the professor who had made his life a living hell for five years was a decent guy?

Snape was neither deaf nor stupid. He managed to hear conversations with students all the time. He had never once heard even a Slytherin student defend him, and he was their head of house! In fact, he couldn't remember anyone besides professors defend him, and most of the time that was only to prevent students from bad-mouthing another teacher, rather than out of compassion. The only person who had ever seemed to actually like him for who he was, was the headmaster.

'Of course. Of course! The only other person who may have had a chance at liking me and he's gone off and gotten himself a death sentence for playing the hero,' Snape thought to himself as he huffed angrily. It was lucky for his students that he had canceled his earlier class, because even he would have been frightened away by the scowl that crossed his face now.

It wasn't that he was desperate for people to like him. Obviously, with all the people he emotionally chased away, that wasn't really a concern for him. He had never had many friends in his childhood or during his schooling. He had long ago learned how to be emotionally independent. He didn't need other people to like him as long as they respected him, even if it was respect based on fear.

'But it's still nice...' he told himself but then immediately told himself to shut up and stop sounding like one of Dumbledore's speeches.

"Severus, you underestimate people. If you just gave them a chance, I think you might just find yourself pleasantly surprised. After all, it's always nice to have people who care about you."

But Potter didn't care about him, nor did he care about the stupid Gryffindor.

'Then why are you stalking around your chambers like you're going to kill something because you found out he's dying?' a little voice in his head asked. Snape told his mind to shut the hell up.

He decided to do his little mental exercise that he had been doing since finding out about Harry's home life. Or perhaps he had been

doing it since the day the boy had started Hogwarts. Maybe even longer.

‘All right. Why I hate Harry Potter,’ he started silently, sitting down on his couch. ‘He’s a pampered little prince. Oh yeah, that one doesn’t work any more. Okay, he’s an arrogant attention seeker. Well, that one isn’t exactly true either since he hates attention and has a pretty low self-esteem. He bullied other kids just because he could. Damn, I’ve heard enough fights outside my classroom door and in the halls to know that the kid is never the one to start the fights and never really bullies. Okay, think, think... all right everyone gives him special treatment because of his fame. Well some of them do! Well, I suppose that’s not exactly his fault. But he totally disregards the rules! Not that I didn’t break a fair share of rules in my day. Oh come on, though! His father was James bloody Potter!’

Snape groaned in frustration. He always seemed to forget that his little list wasn’t very convincing anymore. All he could come up with was because the boy’s father was an arrogant twit? He hated the boy because of who his father was? A father that didn’t even raise the boy.

‘And look at my father!’ he thought in disgust. ‘Death Eater to the core. Ignorant, subservient and spineless. Merlin, if people judged me by my father....’

Snape vividly recalled the helpless look about the boy as Snape had carried him to the Hospital Wing earlier that day. It was just as the first time, but even more frightening, not knowing what was wrong with him, because he just couldn’t believe that he could have some fatal illness like his friends had said. The blue tint to his lips, the ragged breathing, Madam Pomfrey saying that his pulse was weakening. His own worry had come as a surprise to himself. The relief that had come when his friends informed the adults that Harry had woken and spoke with them briefly, was totally unexpected.

Oh Merlin and there was Longbottom’s comment too. I need to have my co-president in the ‘Hated by Snape’ club. He had been hurt that Potter thought that he hated him. Of course, he hadn’t given him much reason to believe otherwise with the way he acted toward him

in class. But why should he care, wasn't the comment true? Wasn't it? He was just so confused. And wait, he had been hurt that Potter thought that? That wasn't true. Was it?

"I'm Severus Snape!" he called out angrily to the empty room. "I don't get hurt by other people. I don't care about people, but especially not Harry bloody Potter!"

"Never be ashamed to care, Severus," a voice said from behind him. Snape's head whirled around to find a distressed looking Dumbledore.

"How long have you been standing there?" Snape asked annoyed.

"Long enough," he said tiredly. Snape's expression softened in seeing the weariness on the headmaster's face.

"Well, you might as well come in and sit down," he sighed gesturing to the chair next to him.

"Thank you Severus." Dumbledore walked over and sat down on a dark green chair.

"Albus, maybe this is just another one of Potter's horrid jokes. A plea for attention."

Dumbledore looked up at him and smiled sadly. "Severus, even you know Harry better than that."

"And there's absolutely no hope for a cure?" Snape asked with a sigh.

"No. Poppy has told me that there is nothing to cure it once it has been transferred and there is no way for it to be transferred to someone else. I contacted a few experts on rare medical cases and they gave me the same answer." He sighed. "I don't think he realized how his actions would affect people. Poppy feels guilty for giving him the spell. I've just finished speaking with Minerva and Remus. Both care for him deeply and I doubt Harry even knows it."

"How did they take it?" Snape asked curiously, taking a seat on the couch. Dumbledore sighed.

"They were both shocked, didn't say much. Last I saw, they were in Minerva's chambers, sitting at her table, each trapped in their own thoughts. They're trying to get it to sink in. They will be the only two I will tell. It's really Harry's to tell, not mine. I only told them because I need Minerva to be aware of it if anything goes wrong, being his head of house. Remus will discover it anyways, since Sirius will be finding out soon. I think it's safe to assume that Remus would have adopted Harry long ago if it had been safe and legal to do so, but with his condition as a werewolf, well, it would have been impossible. Even now, I'm not sure if I should inform more. Does Hagrid have a right to know? The Weasleys? The Stensons? I just don't know. I can't judge that."

Snape had never seen the elder man look so weary and confused before. He had never known him not to have the answers before.

"I think you're right, Albus. It's Potter's business really. It should be up to him to inform who he wants. If you tell too many people without his consent, he will never trust you again," he said, trying to hide the uncertainty in his voice. He paused. "What about you, Albus? Are you...erm...are you all right?" he asked. It felt strange to show concern and he felt oddly vulnerable. Luckily, the headmaster didn't point it out. There was a pregnant pause.

"I should have seen this, Severus. I thought something was going on with him. Suddenly he was showing such advancements in his skills. I didn't push to figure it out though. I convinced myself that if Harry was keeping something secret, that it wasn't anything serious, or he would have come to me. I didn't want to believe that something could be wrong, especially not this wrong. This is the second time this year I have underestimated the seriousness of a situation concerning him. I so want him to lead a happy life that I seem to convince myself that things are fine when they aren't. I've been so wrapped up in what I wanted to believe his life was, that I've overlooked the reality," he said clearly distressed.

"Sounds familiar," Snape mumbled thinking of how he had done the same in his own way.

“And how are you feeling about this, Severus,” Dumbledore asked, looking into Snape’s eyes as if searching his soul.

“Don’t expect me to sympathize with the boy, Albus. He knew what he was doing and should be prepared to deal with the consequences of his actions,” Snape said apathetically.

“Severus, you should know by now that I know you well enough to know when you lie,” Dumbledore said, a small twinkle reappearing in his eyes. Snape sneered at him, but couldn’t put his usual conviction behind it. “Right, right, of course. James Potter’s son, right? Well, I won’t nag you about it right now, but we’ll have to talk about this later when you’ve had time to think and sort out your confusion. I’m glad to see, however, that you are beginning to think of him as something besides his father’s son,” Dumbledore grinned and left, leaving Snape wondering for the millionth time how exactly the man could figure out what he was thinking.

Harry sat in the hospital wing bed with a piece of parchment resting on a book on his lap. His quill kept touching down to the paper, but when the words failed to present themselves, it popped back between Harry’s teeth. How could he concentrate on his History of Magic essay when Sirius was going to be there soon?

Suddenly, the door creaked open. Harry froze. What was he going to say? He looked to the window. Was it really that far of a jump?

Then, Hermione’s head popped through the door and Harry started breathing again. She smiled.

“Nervous?” she asked walking over to his bedside.

“No.”

“Then why do you look like a pack of Dementors are going to burst in the door any minute?”

Harry grinned sheepishly. “Oh good, well at least I’ve got a courageous look about me,” he said sarcastically.

"You know, Harry, it's okay to be nervous. It's going to be really hard to tell him something like this, I mean, who knows what his reaction might be. I'd be nervous to."

"Well thanks, 'Mione...I think," he said, unsure if her comment was meant to make him feel better or not.

"Just remember, you've already done this once with Ron and I, and we're still here."

Surprisingly, that did make Harry feel better. He hadn't really compared the two before, but he had done this before, sort of.

The door opened and Sirius popped his head in.

"Hello, Hermione."

"Hi. Well, I really ought to be going now. I'll see you later, Harry," she said giving Harry's hand a reassuring squeeze. She left the room, closing the door behind her.

"Hey Harry, Dumbledore told me you were in here and needed to talk to me. What's going on? Why are you in here again?" He paused. "It doesn't have anything to do with those Muggles again, does it? Because I swear, if..."

"Calm down, Sirius, it's not that."

"Oh, I see, well then," he said plopping into a chair next to Harry's bed. "What's going on?"

Harry took a deep breath. This was going to be hard.

"Do you know what Cancer is, Sirius?" he sighed.

"Never heard of it," he said shaking his head.

"It's a Muggle illness; a bad one. Many types are terminal, meaning that people die from it. Well, during the summer I spent most of my

time with this Muggle family, the Stensons, and I became really close to them. Then Mr. Stenson was diagnosed with Cancer.”

“I’m so sorry, Harry, that must be really hard. Is there anything I can do to help?” he interrupted. Harry held up a hand to stop him.

“Please, Sirius, I’m not done and I should probably just say this before I lose my nerve, okay?”

Sirius nodded for him to continue.

“Well, I found that there was only one way to cure him. I-I...” he began to falter.

“It’s okay, Harry, keep going. You can tell me,” Sirius said reassuringly. Harry took another deep breath.

“Well, Cancer can’t be destroyed, only transferred.” Sirius knitted his eyebrows in confusion before his jaw dropped open. He backed up in his chair as though he had been slapped.

“What are you saying, Harry?” His eyes grew wide. “Why are you in the Hospital Wing? No. You didn’t. Please tell me you didn’t...”

“I did. Sirius, I’m so sorry, but I couldn’t let him die. So I transferred it to myself,” Harry said quietly.

The next few minutes were chaotic. First, Sirius began to faint, his eyes starting to roll back. Just when Harry was going to call Madam Pomfrey, Sirius regained his senses and began screaming that it wasn’t true. After Harry convinced him that it was, he demanded that Harry simply give it back. Harry explained that this was impossible so Sirius ordered Harry to give him the spell and was prepared to transfer it to himself.

“No, Sirius! I’d never let you do that....anyways, it’s impossible,” Harry said shaking his head. Sirius sat down and put his head in his hands.

"There's no way to cure it?" he asked desperately, massaging his temples.

"No."

"Well, how many years does this thing take to become fatal?"

Harry winced. "Not years, Sirius. I have, at most, until July."

"What?" Sirius asked in an almost crazed expression, jumping out of his chair. "What have you done, Harry? What were you thinking? WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH YOU?" he screamed.

"I...", he started, but Sirius cut him off.

"And you didn't even tell me?! How the HELL could you do this to me?"

"I'm sorry," he said quietly, fighting back tears.

"You're sorry?" he asked incredulously. "YOU'RE SORRY? Your mum sacrificed her life for you and this is how you repay her? By just giving it up like her sacrifice was nothing?"

The words stabbed into Harry's heart. He tried to remain calm but he could feel a burning sensation in his throat as tears began to well up in his eyes. His voice was noticeably strained. "No. I just made a sacrifice of my own for someone I consider family to me."

"What, someone you met this summer? How could you be so bloody stupid? That isn't family Harry! HE'S NOT YOUR FAMILY!" Sirius screamed in rage.

"Well I need some family and the Dursleys certainly don't qualify! So if he's not my family then who is?" Harry snapped back, choking back tears.

"Me! I'm your family!" Sirius yelled.

“Oh really? Just because you have the title of my godfather?” Harry screamed angrily.

“I broke out of Azkaban for you!” Sirius screamed back.

“You broke out of Azkaban to kill Peter! You didn’t give a shit about me until I said I wanted to live with you!” Harry screamed, leaning forward angrily. “And did you ever wonder why I’d be so excited to live with someone who I had thought wanted to murder me until minutes before? Did you even consider that there might be a reason I was so desperate to leave the Dursleys to go live with an escaped convict? No! Because you didn’t care! So don’t give me this crap about being the loving parent figure.”

Sirius looked at him with a pained expression and Harry’s anger melted away.

“Oh my God, Sirius, I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean that.”

“No, you’re right Harry. I have been a horrible godfather. But you’re wrong about me not caring. I’ve always cared about you from the day you were born. I begged Hagrid to let me take you when your parents died. I would have given up getting revenge on Peter if Hagrid had given you to me. Honestly. I couldn’t really think of you being alive while I was in Azkaban, because that was a happy thought that was taken away from me. All I could think of was Peter. After I got Azkaban out of my system, though, I cared about you more than any petty revenge on Peter. But then I ignored what was right in front of my nose about those bastards you lived with. Oh Merlin, if I had been there, you wouldn’t have done this!” he said, bursting into tears.

“That’s not true, Sirius. I would have done it anyways. But I’m glad you’re here now,” Harry said quietly.

Sirius sat down next to him and grabbed Harry’s hand in both of his. He rested his head on the hands, crying into them. “No. no. no. no. This isn’t happening.”

"I'm sorry Sirius," Harry hiccuped through his tears. Sirius looked at him sniffing.

"When you were little, we all used to call you Prongs Jr. Did you know that?" Sirius asked in an unusually high voice because of the crying. Harry shook his head.

"James thought you'd be a Chaser like him, and Lily said you'd be a Beater because you kicked a lot when you were in her stomach. I said you'd be a Keeper because you would sit in doorways and wouldn't let anyone past you without picking you up. Remus said you'd be a Seeker. I don't even know why. Maybe because it was the only one left. I think he saw something though. He was always the smart one. I'm glad you became a Seeker. You're excellent. I was so proud of you when I saw you play. You were better than even James was. I was so proud," he sobbed. Harry didn't know why Sirius was telling him all of this but he liked hearing it anyway.

"James and I would always fight over holding you and Lily would have a fit because she thought we would drop you."

Harry laughed through his tears.

"I always teased them that I was going to come in the night and steal you away so that I could keep you. They made me your godfather because they knew I wouldn't have it any other way," he told Harry with a blurry-eyed smile.

"And now I finally had the chance to do it. I was going to show you that I would have been a great godfather. And now....and now..." Sirius began crying into his fists which still held Harry's hand.

"Oh Merlin. First James and Lily and now you. I'm losing everyone," he muttered. Harry felt the gnawing pains of guilt.

"I'm so sorry, Sirius," Harry sobbed. "I'm sorry."

"I was going to show you such a great summer! I had so much planned! Why didn't you tell me?" His words stung Harry. He knew this was a shock to everyone, but why were they all rubbing into his

face all the things he was going to miss out on? It wasn't like he was going on to some huge party they weren't invited to, he was dying!

Sirius must've seen the pained expression on Harry's face and his expression immediately softened.

"I'm sorry, Harry. I just don't know what I'm going to do without you." Sirius put his head into his hands. "Why?" he sobbed, "Why did you think that you deserved this more than that Muggle?"

Harry was actually glad he asked this question. Now he would be able to explain.

"Sirius, he's a father. He has a wife and a daughter. He means so much to them. They would be lost without him. His daughter, Kota, told me once that she loved him more than life itself. You see? I couldn't just let that just be destroyed when I could do something about it," he explained desperately. He knew Sirius couldn't argue with that. Surely he would see how important Mr. Stenson was.

But Sirius just looked at him with a slightly horrified expression. "Harry, there are people who feel the exact same way about you! Don't you understand that? I would die for you in a heartbeat."

He studied Harry's face and must have picked up on the skepticism that Harry felt. He had never felt loved in his childhood. Even now, he didn't believe that anyone could love him like the Stensons loved each other, or how the Weasleys loved each other. He knew Sirius cared about him, but Harry had long ago abandoned the fantasy that they could have what the Stensons and Weasleys had. His chance had died the night that his parents died.

Sirius grabbed Harry by the shoulders and looked frantically into his eyes. "You didn't know that? You believe me don't you?" Harry nodded but his eyes told the truth. No, he didn't believe that.

"I guess this is the worst consequence of us leaving you with those monsters," Sirius murmured. Harry wasn't quite sure what Sirius meant by that.

Sirius suddenly wrapped his arms around Harry and pulled him into a hug. He began to weep into Harry's shoulder.

Harry awkwardly hugged Sirius back and just let him cry.

Eowyn of Ithilien: Ooh I write Ron like butter!! YAY!! I'm glad you liked Ron's reaction and thought it was touching, since that, of course, is what I was trying to achieve. I'm really sorry about your grandmother; that must've been awful. On a lighter note: your boombox and mine should be friends because they seem so similar!! Your crown sounds awesome!

Dadaiiro: Yay!! I made you cry?? Score! If it makes you feel better, I cried when I wrote it! I agree with you about Hermione's and Ron's characters. That's why I'm focusing more on wrong. We all know how Hermione will react since she wears her heart on her sleeve. She shows her emotions so when a situation is sad, so is she, which is great but not much of a mystery. That's why I like focusing on characters with more unpredictable reactions. Anyways, the Stensons will find out later, Voldie won't know for now (you'll see their excuse to the student body in the next chapter.) I can't tell you about Harry's cancer, but I can tell you that it's not looking good. He's not kidding when he says there's no cure, but I guess you'll see what happens eventually. I love the Wormtail suggestion, but unfortunately one case of cancer can't be transferred a second time! What'll happen? Only time will tell. Yeah, Harry is going back to classes. Hogwarts is his home after all and he's not too sick to go to class. He just had a bad...attack we'll call it.

Terence (and her egg!): Oh I'm so happy you liked it!! Honestly, your review almost brought a tear to my eye! Thank you so much for the wonderful compliments! You have no idea how hard I laughed when you wrote as you hopefully know eggs don't talk. You know they really do! I mean really, could you live with 11 other eggs in a carton for so long without starting up a conversation? I don't think so! I'm glad you picked up on Harry asking about his friends! He's so unconcerned with his own well being! It makes him that much more

adorable in my opinion. Anyways, your constant reviews are so encouraging so I want to say thank you! Hope you liked the chapter!

Srialb: I'm glad I made you cry since I then know that you are into my story! Does that make sense? Anyways, you have to wait for the Stensons, but not for Sirius! I'm so sorry to hear what happened to you! That's so horrible! I dedicated this chapter to you as my blessing for you. I hope I got it up in time for you!

LizhowHP: Thank you for the mental Chinese food since it is now physically on its way!! My mouth is watering waiting for it. Mmmmm.... Anyways, praise is always welcome. Lol. Hope you liked the chapter!

Luinlothana: Yay, it was a shock for poor Neville, especially since he didn't know about it before like Hermione and Ron did. Neville doesn't seem to me like he has many friends so Harry being his friend and helping him in Potions must mean a lot to him, you know? Poor Neville, he's led such a hard life. Alright, that's a bit off track. Anyway, I hope you liked Sirius's reaction. It was hard to write! Thank you for the wonderful reviews and I hope you liked the chapter.

Maximum Poofy-Queen of AU: I'm really glad I made you cry, as weird as that sounds. Wow. I'm so happy to hear you like it so much!! Thank you! It's reviews like yours that motivate me to post and make my story better. I really hope you liked this chapter!

Fay Stone: LOL. I loved your review! Honestly, I was laughing with glee at your description of your convo with your mom because I know what that's like. I usually protest that I am not crying. "Tears? These aren't tears, it's just my allergies." (I don't have allergies but oh well.) I hope you liked this chapter!!!

Two2feet: I'm glad I made you get emotional! It's so uplifting! (I guess that sounds sort of weird but it's true!) I hope you continue to read and review! I hope you liked Sirius's reaction!

Ckat44: Yay! I love to hear it when people cry with my story! It shows me that they're emotionally involved! Unfortunately, the

cancer cannot be transferred again! You'll just have to wait to see what happens! Don't want to destroy the suspense and all!

Angel74: Actual tears? Really? I'm honored, honestly. You're right, I think Ron gets pegged as careless and insensitive, but I think it's just a macho thing he puts up which is now coming down since he's faced with such a serious situation. Thank you so much for the wonderful review and I really hope you liked this chapter.

Ambookworm247: Lol. I love our new club. The Harry Bashing Brigade! LOL. I'm glad you enjoyed the chapter. I like the idea of an epilogue, but I'm slightly confused on what you mean with a book about the Harry Potter tale. You mean for the wizarding world, a book should be written about Harry's life story? That would be a good idea! Hey, maybe Harry was a real wizard and J.K. Rowling is a witch who did his biography but then turned around and gave it to Muggles, passing it off as fiction! *gasp* Yeah, I'm way too into this.

BratPrincess187: Yay! I'm glad you liked it! Harry told Sirius, as I'm sure you've realized by now lol. I hope you liked his reaction. It was hard to write! Thank you so much for your review!

o Hell o Kitty o: I'm glad you thought it was so sad! Yay, it's great for my friend in remission. I'm so happy about it! I think I get too much joy out of telling people that I can't tell them anything about the ending and that they'll have to find out on their own. I know what's going to happen already and it's so fun knowing that you guys are still in suspense! Hope you liked the chapter!

Reanne80: Lol. When I read J.K.'s books, I always really want to give Neville a big hug. I always wished that Harry had talked to Neville about his parents. *sniff sniff* I love Neville, especially in book 5. Yay, so that was random. Anyways, you'll just have to see what happens to Harry. *sniggers with glee* it's so fun knowing what's going to happen and have you all in the dark!

Thank you also to Rain Warrior, crazyfanfictionfanatic, Joe, and Blackenedsoul for your wonderful reviews!

Author's Note: School has officially begun for me. I have the most fabulous English teacher (of course I may be biased since I loooove English, if that's not obvious by the fact that I write stories in my spare time), a really scary history teacher, a really hard science teacher, and a really dumb French teacher. *sigh* Oh well, at least I can look forward to English!! Anywho, now that school has begun, my posts may be a little bit more delayed though I'm thinking that the absolute worst scenario would be 1 chapter a week (on the weekends when I have a second to breathe.) That's not too bad, right? I'll try to be better than that though! Well, on with the chapter where Cho begins her evil ways....

* * * * *

Harry was forced to stay bed-ridden in the Hospital Wing for the next few days, despite his protests. Hermione, of course, brought him his homework assignments and was more than happy to teach him everything that he had missed in class. When he wasn't reading, doing assignments, or entertaining visitors, he carved his initials into the wooden bedpost with a needle that had been left by his bed after his first night there. He carved them where Madam Pomfrey couldn't see them. She knew she'd probably have a fit if she knew he had vandalized her workplace in such a way, but didn't really feel guilty about it. He was always given this bed and had visited the Hospital Wing probably more than any other Hogwarts student. It was practically his bed anyways.

Of course his absence from class had not gone unnoticed and the tale of Snape carrying him through the halls had spread throughout the school. (He winced with embarrassment each time he was asked about it.) Everyone who didn't know the truth had been fed a story that Snape had come up with. They said that Harry had tried drinking the Bruise-Healing Potion to get rid of some bruises from Quidditch, but that Harry had a bad reaction to it since he hadn't made it right. Harry wasn't too fond of this rumor since he knew that his potion had been perfect, but it was better than the truth.

The only other person Harry allowed to know the truth was Eloise, since Neville wanted to tell her. Harry let him under the condition that he keep Eloise away from the infirmary for a few days after telling her

so she could have time to calm down. He didn't feel like dealing with another hysterical person.

By the time she was allowed to come and see Harry, she had definitely calmed down. Her eyes were slightly red and puffy. When he promised he'd be out in a few days to continue with their tutoring, she did start crying slightly, but it wasn't a hysterical outburst, much to Harry's relief.

A bunch of others, including all the members of the Gryffindor Quidditch team, came to see him. When they saw that he was looking fine, they laughed and lightly teased him for drinking anything Snape had told him to make.

There was always a slight look of suspicious worry in each pair of eyes that met his, because, if it was nothing serious, as Harry insisted, then why was he being kept in the Hospital Wing for so long? They always did their best to wipe away these thoughts, more content with the belief that Harry was fine than venturing into the frightening territory of wondering if maybe it was something more.

A week later, Harry walked into the Great Hall for breakfast to a bunch of excited chattering. As Harry walked to the Gryffindor table, he noticed that many of the girls were giggling and gossiping, while several of the guys looked sick. This included Ron.

On his way to the table, Cho Chang brushed by him.

"Hi Harry," she said with a flirtatious smile.

"Er...hey Cho."

"Remember, I'm single now." She waved by wiggling her fingers at him and walked off. Harry blanched at her words.

'Well, that was a little blunt. What was that all about?'

Many of the other girls in the Great Hall had also seemed to turn up the flirtation factor.

Harry slid into the seat beside Ron. "What's going on?"

"Another bloody dance. As if it wasn't stressful enough the first time!" he muttered.

"A dance?" he asked, glancing up at Cho who's friends were giggling and looking up at him. Cho herself was looking at Harry. When she caught his eye, she gave him a little wink that made Harry's eyebrows shoot up and her friends burst out in peels of giggles. He looked back to his friends.

"Yes a dance, Harry. Please tell me you're not going to mope around about it like Ron," Hermione pleaded.

"Maybe it won't be as bad this year. At least I don't have to dance in front of everyone," Harry said optimistically.

"Have you forgotten the little problem of asking the girl, Harry?" Ron asked exasperated.

"No, but I think I know who I'm going to ask this year," he said thoughtfully

"Oh really, Harry? Who?" Hermione asked eagerly.

"I'll tell you after I ask her," he said mysteriously.

"What about you, Ron, do you know who you want to ask?" Hermione asked casually, not quite meeting his eye. Harry could tell that she was trying to hide her anxiety about the subject.

Ron blushed and looked with interest at his goblet of pumpkin juice. "Nope, no idea. What about you, 'Mione? Who do you want to go with?" he asked, looking slowly up at her.

Hermione blushed as well, looking down at her plate. "Oh I don't know," she said, swirling some of the food around on her plate.

Harry couldn't help it; he burst out laughing. The two looked up at him curiously.

"What?" Ron asked.

"Nothing," he responded, still smiling. "You guys are just funny."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Hermione asked.

"Nothing," he said shaking his head.

"Well anyways, you two don't have to be nervous about this whole thing. Just ask somebody sooner rather than later. I'm sure there are plenty of girls who'd love to go with you and are just waiting for you to ask them," she said, looking pointedly at Ron.

Neville had seen this too and caught Harry's eye. They both burst out in another bout of laughter.

"What?" Ron asked in an irritated voice.

"Nothing," Neville and Harry said simultaneously.

A few days later, Harry went into the library to do some research while Hermione was tutoring Ron in potions. Cho Chang brushed by him as he entered, looking back at him over her shoulder with a flirtatious smile as she left. He was making his way toward the back when he saw Ginny Weasley looking almost tearful. She was staring at a book with her elbows on the table and her hands grabbing her hair in frustration. Harry walked over.

"Hey Ginny, is everything okay?" he asked softly.

Ginny's head shot up. She looked embarrassed.

"Yeah, I'm just having some trouble understanding some stuff for school," she sighed.

"I know how that is," Harry said smiling. "What's the subject?"

“Muggle Studies. I thought it would be easy and since my dad loves Muggle stuff so much I thought it would be fun to take. It’s so hard though! I should have just taken Divination.”

“How about some help? I mean, I did grow up like a Muggle, so maybe I’ll be able to explain some of this stuff better than some textbook.”

“Really?” she asked, sounding grateful.

“Of course.”

“Okay, as long as...well, can you please not tell my family? I don’t want them to know I’m having trouble with it.”

Harry smiled reassuringly as he pulled up a chair. “Sure thing. I won’t breathe a word about it under one condition.”

“What’s that?” she asked.

“Never let me hear the words ‘I should have taken Divination’ again.”

Ginny laughed. “Okay.”

Harry scooted his chair next to hers and looked down at the book. “So what are we learning about?”

“Television. In the book it says that it’s a ‘box that many Muggles have in their homes. It shows them picture shows of real or non-real things. The picture shows can be on regular programming or on videocassettes that are inserted into the television, with real people or moving drawings called cartoons,’” she read.

“Wow. That does make it confusing. Let’s see if I can explain this better.” Harry launched into an explanation of television, relating it to wizarding things to help Ginny get the idea. He told her it was sort of like wizarding pictures acting out plays, or the WWN news with a picture to go with it. He explained commercials and videotapes and the news. He told her about some of the movies that he had seen

that summer at the Stensons to give her an idea of what they were about. It was more difficult to explain than he had thought, but fun to be explaining something so familiar to him, having grown up with Muggles.

As he did when tutoring Neville and Eloise, he felt a surge of pride when Ginny finally understood concepts, a look of comprehension dawning on her face. At the end of his explanation, she beamed at him joyfully.

"I finally understand this! Thank you so much, Harry!"

Harry flashed her a lop-sided grin. "No problem, I'm glad I can help. So what's next?"

They went through stoves, batteries, and CDs that day. Harry agreed to meet Ginny two times a week to tutor her, and whenever else she needed. He vowed to keep his mouth shut about it, to Ginny's great relief. She begged him to let her do something in return so he asked her to help him look up the topic he was researching but refused to request anything more.

Ginny left the library remembering exactly why this was the boy she adored.

"Hey Eloise, you look stressed. What's up?" Harry asked sliding down next to Eloise in the library.

"Oh it's nothing," she said in a tone that indicated that it was indeed something.

"It's not going to do any good to sit there and mope on your own. I'm a great person to mope with, you know," Harry said with a smile. Eloise sighed.

"Thanks, but I don't really want to talk about it," she said with a weak smile. Harry was pretty sure he knew what she was upset about. As hard as it was to ask a girl to a dance, the harder it must've been to wait to be asked, especially knowing you didn't get asked the previous year, as was Eloise's case. Harry winced once again at the

memory of what Ron had said while trying to find dates to last year's ball.

"I'd rather go alone than with—with Eloise Midgen, say."

He knew Ron would never say that now, knowing Eloise through Harry, but Harry still wished he would have stood up for her last year.

"Alright, well, I was wondering if I could ask you something?"

"Sure Harry, you can ask me anything," she smiled.

"I was wondering if you'd like to go to the ball with me?"

Whatever Eloise was expecting him to ask, it was obviously not this. She stared at him like he had two heads.

"What?"

"Well as friends, of course. I wouldn't want to move into Roger Davies' spot," he said with a grin. "I just thought you'd be really fun to go with and I promise not to hide behind the punch bowl the entire time."

She continued to gawk at him. "Harry, don't be ridiculous! You have the chance to go with any girl here! Don't you understand? Practically every girl in school wants to go with you." Harry rolled his eyes at the exaggeration.

"Oh brother, Eloise. Even if that was true, which I know it's not, I wouldn't want to go with all those shallow, annoying girls who are so concerned with what they look like and what their reputation is. I mean, who needs to worry about screwing up a girl's image by being a bad date or something?"

"Harry, you'd be committing social suicide," she said absolutely seriously. Harry laughed.

"First of all, I don't care about all that. Second, you underestimate yourself, Eloise. Even if I did care about any of that, I'd still ask you,"

he assured her. "So do I get an answer or are you going to keep me waiting here in anticipation?"

"Harry, are you sure? I mean you can still change your mind and I won't care," she pressed, biting her bottom lip.

"Eloise, listen, I wouldn't have asked you if I didn't want to go with you. If you don't want to go with me you can say no, but I'd love to take you if you want to. I should warn you though that I...er...don't exactly know how to dance."

"And you're sure? Last chance..."

"As sure as I am that Filch needs a social life," he smirked. A huge smile broke out on Eloise's face.

"Oh Harry, thank you so much! Yes, I'd love to go with you! You're the best friend ever!" she exclaimed. Suddenly, her face calmed a bit as if a sudden thought had crossed her mind. "Wait, Harry, are you sure you'll be able to, all things considered?" she asked delicately. Harry frowned. He hadn't thought about that. With his permission, Neville had told Eloise about the cancer.

"Oh yeah. Tell you what; I'll be your reserve date. If Roger Davies comes knocking down your door, definitely go ahead. If by the dance you still don't have a date, and I feel fine, then we'll go, deal?" he bargained but Eloise shook her head.

"No, I'll just tell my future husband that he'll have to knock down my door some other time. If you don't feel up to the dance that night, we'll just scrounge up some graham crackers, chocolate, and marshmallows and we'll make S'mores in the fireplace and I'll tell you about the four children I've decided that Roger and I will have, sound good?" Harry smiled.

"Sounds great."

Ron had been a nervous wreck ever since the dance had been announce. He had been caught lost in thought and every time Hermione asked him a question he would turn beet red and start

stuttering. Hermione was perplexed by Ron's behavior, but Harry knew exactly what was going on. For that reason, he pulled Hermione aside after dinner and said that he'd go talk to Ron to "see what's bothering him." She agreed shooting a concerned glance at Ron and went to the library.

"Hey Ron, let's take a walk," he said steering his friend outside. The two began walking.

"So, why'd you want to walk, Harry?" Ron asked.

"I think you know."

"Huh? I don't know what you're talking about," he answered indignantly, his blushing face giving him away.

"Well, then I'm sure you're totally relaxed about the whole dance thing then."

"That obvious, huh?" He grinned, embarrassed.

"Only because I know you too well. So what's on your mind?"

"Well, I...er...have somebody, maybe in mind of who I kind of could want to sort of ask..." he coughed out looking away.

"Hermione," Harry stated casually, motioning for Ron to continue. Ron's head spun to face Harry, mouth gaping and eyes wide.

"You know?!" Harry rolled his eyes.

"Of course I know, Ron. I see the way you two act around each other. I see you sneaking glances at her all the time, sometimes staring at her for ten minutes at a time!"

"I do not!" he cried. Harry looked him in the eye. "Okay, well maybe sometimes." He grinned sheepishly. The two continued walking.

"She sneaks glances at you too."

“Really?” he asked, spinning his head toward Harry in surprise.

“Yup. It’s quite amusing to watch you two, I must say.”

Ron paused nervously.

“So if I asked her to the dance, you think...”

“I KNOW she’d say yes.”

“And it wouldn’t be weird?”

“Now that, I can’t guarantee, but I don’t think that it would be a bad weird.”

Ron smiled, “Thanks, Harry.”

Harry grinned. “No problem, mate, just ask her before you have a nervous breakdown because she’s beginning to think you’re insane.” He paused. “Well actually, she probably already knows you’re insane so it’s useless to try and hide that one,” he said in mock seriousness with a hopeless shrug.

Ron laughed and promptly pushed him into the shallow part of the lake, soaking him from head to toe. Harry smirked evilly as he got up and waded his way onto shore.

“You know, Ron, you’re a great friend. I think you deserve a nice big hug, what do you say?”

Ron took one look at the water dripping off Harry’s robes and began backing away. “Don’t even think about it,” he warned. Harry grabbed up an empty pot near one of the green houses and dipped it in the lake. Ron began running as soon as he realized what Harry was doing, but he was no match for Harry’s speed and soon had a pot of water dumped over his head.

After a brief water fight, the two walked back inside the castle, still dripping water. They were so occupied in laughing at each other's damp state, they almost ran into a group of girls right in front of them.

"Excuse me," Harry said not really looking up as he began to walk around them.

"Harry, wait."

Harry looked up. It was Cho Chang and her group of friends looking just as giggly as ever. If he didn't know better, he would have sworn that Cho was batting her eyelashes at him.

"Er...hey Cho."

She quickly glanced disapprovingly down at the puddle collecting at Harry's feet. Harry shifted uncomfortably. Why was Cho Chang talking to him, especially with her whole gang there to witness?

"So, Harry, my friends and I were just talking about the upcoming ball. You see, Roger Davies just asked me but I turned him down. I told him I was asking someone else."

"Oh really? Er, well, that's nice," he said lamely. Why was she telling him this?

"Don't you want to know who it is?"

Harry sneaked a glance at Ron who shrugged. "Sure." (Mad giggling from Cho's posse.)

"Why you, Harry! I'm asking you to go to the ball with me."

Harry was taken aback. Ron's jaw dropped to the floor.

"Why?" he blurted out, resulting in more giggling.

"Because I want to go with you, silly! Now what do you say?" she asked haughtily, flipping her hair back, waiting for a yes.

“I’m sorry, Cho. I’m already going with someone else, but thank you for asking.”

The giggling abruptly stopped.

“What? Who?” she sputtered.

“Eloise Midgen,” Harry said simply.

Cho’s expression softened. “Oh, I see. Harry, you don’t have to do that just because she asked you, in fact, I’m sure I can find her a date better suited for her.”

It took a second for Harry to register this. He couldn’t believe these cruel words were coming from the mouth of the girl he used to be infatuated with. He was insulted on Eloise’s behalf. No wonder she had low self esteem.

“Actually, I asked her,” he said firmly, his eyes glinting dangerously. “She was my first choice and I’m really happy to be going with her.”

“But, you can’t be serious!” she exclaimed unbelievably.

“Sorry Cho, you’ll have to find someone else,” he said resolutely. “Come on, Ron.” Ron was still standing with his face frozen in an expression of shock. Harry had to grab his arm and lead him away, leaving a group of gaping girls behind.

As soon as they were out of earshot, Ron turned to Harry.

“Cho Chang just asked you to the ball!”

“Yeah, I was there.”

“And she’s the most popular girl in school.”

“I know.”

“And you said no.”

"I've already asked Eloise. Plus, I don't care that she's popular, she's so stuck up and arrogant."

"All right, but you've had a crush on her for how many years?"

"I had a crush on her. Past tense."

"Yeah, I noticed. What happened to the puddles of drool whenever she was around?" Ron asked. Harry laughed and lightly punched Ron's arm. "No, seriously though, it was so sudden."

"Yeah, well I guess I couldn't really look at her the same way after last year, with Cedric and all. Besides, the more I get to know her, the more I wonder why I liked her in the first place."

Ron nodded sympathetically. Harry hardly ever mentioned the Triwizard tournament. Ron knew it was a tough subject for his best friend. He slightly shook his head think about how much Harry had to go through.

"Well, you know, mate, I think you made the right choice. You'll have a lot more fun with Eloise. Cho would just be worried about breaking a nail or something."

The two laughed and walked off toward the dorm.

A/N: Quick question. I thought that James Potter was described as a Chaser in the books. I remember thinking when the movie said he was a Seeker that it wasn't right. Now, however, I can't find it anywhere in the books and I'm really curious now. So in the books, was James a Chaser or a Seeker?

Oh and please be plentiful and generous with the reviews. I'm bummed about school starting (except for English class of course) and it would really cheer me up! Thank you!

Eowyn of Itilien: I laughed so hard at the Gollum comment in your review! That really tickled my funny bone especially with the *whimper whimper* I know what you mean about the “pregnant pause.” It’s so weird! That’s why I love it. I love weird phrases. Call me an English nerd. You have such an awesome imagination by the way. It entertains me more than you could imagine, which is hard since I just said you had quite an imagination. LOL right Celebony, you make so much sense. Anyways, anger is a fun emotion to play with because sometimes anger means the character is really angry, but sometimes people (characters) use it to cover other emotions: confusion, sadness, disappointment, or an emotion they don’t want to feel. It always keeps you wondering. I think it’s really the only emotion that could possibly mean so many things. That’s why I love using it in my story!

Dadaiiro: I absolutely adore your long reviews. I see them, my jaw drops, and then I get all giddy reading them. You’re right. Harry has such a low self-esteem! And then he’s put in the spotlight. No wonder he hates his fame! He’s expected to save the wizarding world and he doesn’t even really believe in himself. Oh Merlin, I sound like some kind of Celine Dion song...Just believe in yourself and you’ll do miracles!!! AHHH!! So corny, but oh well. (I don’t think there’s an actual song like that from Celine Dion, but you know the type.) I have read the 5th book of course! (I started out slightly disappointed but then I realized I absolutely loved it. DA was the coolest thing ever! I was upset that Harry didn’t go back and talk to Snape about what his dad did. Well, maybe in the 6th book!!) I’m glad you’ve caught on to the hopelessness of the situation. Harry is probably thinking about the same things. I guess you’ll just have to see though, just keep reading and you’ll find out what happens your jolly old self!

Terence: Thank you so much! I’m so glad I could bring you and Sirius the Egg together. I’m so happy you like my story so much! Now with your eggs, you’re like Snow White and the 6 Dwarves, but instead it’s Terence and the 12 Eggs! You could become the next Easter Bunny! Once again....YAY!! I’m so happy you liked my chappy and your reviews make me feel all deliriously happy! By the way, if Ernie’s broken, you should replace him with Neville! I love Neville.

Luinlothana: I'm so you liked their reactions. It's a relief I can tell you. Right now, Snape still doesn't want to admit to himself that he doesn't hate Harry. It'll be even harder as the story goes on and as I always say, we'll just have to see what happens with that! I'm sure if there was any potion Snape knew or could find to get rid of the cancer, he would brew it, but there just isn't one. *sigh* One day, you will all find out what's going to happen, but for now, it's only me! Muahahaha!!

SiRiUsLy ObSeSsEd1: I know! Harry's unconcern for himself and his caring for others is what makes him such an endearing character. You just have to wonder where all that came from. Just why has Harry developed into someone with practically no self worth? Dursleys perhaps? Hell yes!! Those *cuss cuss* --ers. Thank you so much for all your wonderful comments. It made me smile and then laugh with glee and then pat my brother on the head and then he looked at me like I had gone insane.

o Hell o Kitty o: I know! Poor Harry has some self-esteem issues that just make me want to hug him. (Same with Neville, especially in books four and five!) Congratulations for paying attention to the summary! I was wondering if everyone had forgotten! Adds a bit more mystery don't you think? Of course I'm not going to tell you, but it's fun that you noticed. I love pizza and Chinese food...mmm.... Writer's block sucks! Luckily I haven't been plagued with it too much. Once I start writing I'm usually fine, but sometimes I get stuck with something in particular (like the Stensons' reactions for example. Still working with that.) Hope you liked the chapter!

LizhowHP: *claps* Bravo! That is one of the mysteries of the story that I was wondering if everyone had forgotten about! I'm sort of hoping they did b/c then, it'll be more fun when it starts to come unraveled. That didn't make any sense but it sounded cool anyways. Okay, so the answer to that question is...come closer...wup no I can't tell you! (I love doing that.) Don't worry, you will find out eventually. Thank you so much for the compliments! I'm so happy you liked these chapters sense I felt really nervous about them (especially the last one).

Maximum Poofy-Queen of AU: I know, poor Sevvie and Siri!! Neither have very many friends and Harry likes, or has potential to like, both of them! It's kind of like that quote "You may be only one person in the world, but you may be the world to one person." (I collect quotes and I love them dearly. If you have any good ones, please share!)

Two2feet: If Snape has to admit to himself that Harry's an okay kid, it'll throw off his whole belief system and he'll have to deal with the guilt from treating him so poorly throughout the past years. That's why he's so intent on hating Harry. I'm glad you liked Sirius's reaction. I love staying up til the wee hours of the morning reading fanfics. Your eyes are drooping and you can barely move the mouse but you are enjoying yourself anyways.

Ckat44: Yup, the situation is rather hopeless. So what's going to go on for the rest of the story? You'll just have to read and see!! I'm so glad you liked my story and hope you continue to like it!

Angel74: LOL thank you for the tears! I love them. You know I can't tell you what will happen! It would ruin the suspense! Just keep reading and you'll find out eventually. Hope you liked the chapter!

Phoenix220: That scene didn't take place in the books, only the movie, but you may be right. I was under the impression that James was a Chaser, but I could be wrong. It has sparked my curiosity though so I looked through the book, looked online, and can't seem to find it. So I've posted the question but I swear I'm just curious now, I'm not trying to prove myself right or anything. What you're saying makes sense though since James was playing with a Snitch in the fifth book. (I'm really hoping that you read it and if you haven't, why haven't you and I'm really sorry.)

Reanne080: Yeah, I love Neville. I know what you mean about the reviews, but in a bit of a different sense. When people guess close to what's happening, I don't know how to respond. In a way I want to say right on, but I also want to steer them clear of that train of thought so I can surprise them in the end. Luckily though, nobody has come near to guessing the ending of my story! The climax is one of my favorite parts, but I can't tell you if it's sad or happy or what cause

you'll just have to see.

Trapper's Girl: I'm glad you liked the chapter. Of course, that's the big question, will Harry make it out of this alive? You'll find out eventually! Lol now that school starts, such quick posts will probably be a rarity, but I like your enthusiasm! Hope you liked the chapter!

BratPrincess-187: Yay! I'm glad you liked their reactions. I seem to be getting some mixed opinions about Snape's reaction, but I'm glad you liked it! I always have reasons for doing things the way I do. La di da di da. What does that mean? Ho hum di dum di dum. Who knows? (Except for me)

AmajoS: wow, you read this entire thing this morning? Woah dang! I'm so happy you found their reactions touching! I cried when I wrote Ron's, but my sister argues that Sirius's is sadder. I disagree though. Anyways, I'm glad I brought you to tears (as strange as that sounds.) Hope you liked the chapter

Srialb: Your welcome. I just hope everything's going okay. That has to be extremely hard. I hope I can offer you my story as my good luck/feel better present. I hope you continue to like it!

Blackenedsoul: No more reactions for a while. I can't tell you the ending! You'll just have to wait and see! Muahahaha! I love knowing while I keep others in suspense. I have already made my decision. It has been set in stone (or on Microsoft Word). *rings a gong for no apparent reason*

Thank you to Melanie and Xirleb70 (love the tears!), Rain Warrior, Leigh, English Girl (the cancer cannot be transferred from Harry without it resulting in his death. Will explain in later chapter), Joe, crazyfanfictionfanatic (takes deep bow "Thank you. Thank you), Arctic Wolf2 (you'll have to wait! Sorry!), Cherry8914, and Fantagal (lol, you'll have to see!!!) for their much appreciated reviews. You all rock!!

Author's Note: Well everyone, I know this took me quite a while to post and I'm very sorry! School is taking up a great chunk of my time right now, but I'm still doing my best. Plus, I've been using my free time to work on certain parts of the story that have taken me a while to figure out how to write. In fact, I'm still working on some of them. I keep coming up with new scenes to add into the story to make it better, so I've been rabidly working to make it better. I've added about 8 chapters in these past few weeks throughout the story and am still adding and fine-tuning. Anyways, thank you all so much for the reviews. They mean a lot to me. I hope you all enjoy this chapter.

* * * * *

"All right team. I want us to all have healthy breakfasts," Angelina instructed, plopping heaps of food on everyone's plate.

"Er, no thanks Angelina, my stomach's not up to it," Harry told her.

"Nonsense," she responded, plopping a bunch of scrambled eggs onto his plate and filling his glass to the brim with orange juice.

Fred tried covering his plate with his hands, but Angelina just dumped food right on top of them, not even noticing with all her nervousness. Today was the final game for the Cup. They were playing against the Slytherins. It was going to be close on points, Slytherin only ten ahead. It was going to be a tight game.

Harry was too nervous to eat much. He picked at his food while Angelina scrutinized all her teammates.

As soon as she turned, the entire team began shoving large portions of food onto other people's plates.

"What? Harry!" Hermione scolded as he pushed all of his bacon onto her plate along with three-fourths of his eggs. Ron did the same to Neville who just laughed.

Each of the team members slipped their plates back in front of them as Angelina turned back around. Harry stuck a forkful of eggs in his mouth and reluctantly swallowed. Angelina looked happy.

“See! I knew you guys needed some fuel.”

Everyone rolled their eyes.

Finally, Angelina signaled for her team to follow her to the locker rooms. They changed into their uniforms silently and then sat down for Angelina to give her pep talk.

“All right, guys and girls, this is it. The final match. The Cup is there, we just have to grab it.” She paused. “Okay, forget this sentimental rubbish. Let’s go squash ‘em!”

This got a resounding cheer. They grabbed their brooms and marched out after Angelina, pumped up and ready to go.

The majority of the crowd roared as they marched out, drowning out the boos and hisses from the Slytherins. As usual in a Gryffindor vs. Slytherin game, three-quarters of the crowd was waving scarlet flags and had large banners saying things like “Sly’s team may be big and rich, but Gryffindors can catch the Snitch!” and “1, 2, 3, 4 Gryffindors are gonna roar!” Harry’s favorite was one with a picture of a lion playing jump rope with a snake.

The Slytherins had a few banners of their own. One had a snake that bit a lion and tore off a chunk of its flesh with the words, “Snakes eat Lion meat!” emblazoned around it. Harry thought that was a little disturbing.

“And here are the Gryffindors with a new keeper and a new captain, both who have proved themselves so far this year. Today will be the true test for the new team of Potter, Bell, Johnson, Spinnet, Weasley, Weasley, and, what do you know, Weasley!” yelled Lee Jordan, who was commentator as usual.

The Slytherins were introduced and Angelina roughly shook hands with the Slytherin captain at Madam Hooch’s command.

“Mount your brooms.”

Harry caught Ron's eye and they both grinned nervously. Madam Hooch blew her whistle and everyone shot into the air.

The game was intense, moving faster and more ferociously than Harry had ever seen it. The Beaters were smashing Bludgers toward people with a newfound fervor. Each attempted goal was thrown with purpose, knocking the keepers back on their brooms each time they caught the Quaffle. For the first time ever, Madam Hooch had to judge if a goal counted. Ron had caught the Quaffle, but it had been thrown with such momentum that it had knocked Ron back, broom and all, through the goal.

When she decided that it didn't count, the Slytherins became outraged. One of the Slytherin Beaters was right next to Harry and in a bout of fury swung his club at him with all his might. It hit Harry in the chest and Harry fell off his broom, grabbing on with one hand, the other one clutching his ribs, which were burning horribly. George was immediately by his side.

"Merlin, Harry, are you all right? Here, get on my broom and I'll fly you down," he said worriedly as Madam Hooch was screaming herself blue at the Slytherin Beater.

Harry took several deep, painful breaths. "I'm okay," he gasped. He swung himself back onto his broom and the game recommenced.

The next time George got near a Bludger, he hit it toward the offending Slytherin Beater with all his might, only succeeding in making the huge guy drop his club. With a growl, he had to dive down to go get it.

Harry could only take shallow breaths now, but tore his concentration away from the pain to look for the Snitch.

Malfoy came up beside him at one point, laughing. "Well, you fly as poorly as a Bludger, so you can see how the mistake was made."

"We'll see who's laughing when Angelina's holding the Quidditch Cup," he retorted, wincing at the pain that shot through his torso as he tried to talk.

“Not with my team’s new brooms,” he said. Malfoy’s father had updated the team’s brooms again that year to Lightningstrikes, the newest brooms on the line.

“Once again, paying for your spot on the team, Malfoy,” Harry said.

Malfoy just glared at Harry before flying away to look for the Snitch.

Harry’s eyes searched all below him, but finding nothing, he turned his eyes to the sky. He saw it; it was above Harry and slightly down the field.

Harry pressed himself to his broom and shot off. Malfoy caught on soon after and began to zoom after Harry. The superior speed on Malfoy’s broom caused him to be catching up more quickly than Harry had hoped. Harry flattened his body to his broom, despite the pain in his chest and concentrated his whole mind on the Snitch. Malfoy was still right near him, but was now only inching up compared to Harry’s speed.

Harry reached his hand out with a gasp at the stab of agony in his torso. Malfoy tried to hit Harry’s arm away, but Harry managed to wrap his hands around the fluttering Snitch.

Malfoy swore loudly and spun to a halt.

“Harry Potter has caught the Snitch! Gryffindor has won the cup!” Lee yelled with glee into the microphone. The crowd roared and Harry smiled triumphantly.

Below, the same Slytherin Beater who had assaulted Harry before hit a Bludger at him in fury. But his aim was off.

“Malfoy, watch out!” Harry yelled, but it was too late. The Bludger caught the unsuspecting Slytherin, knocking him completely off his broom.

When Harry saw that nobody, not even the Slytherin team, was making any move to help him, he dropped the Snitch to put both

hands on his broom and dove. The crowd watched helplessly as Malfoy plummeted toward the ground. Dumbledore and the other professors were distracted with getting the Cup.

Harry caught up with Malfoy and somehow managed to pull him onto his broom before evening out. Malfoy's body slammed up against Harry's chest when Harry yanked him onto the broom and Harry let out a cry of anguish.

Malfoy turned his head and looked at Harry in utter surprise. "You caught me," he said in shock.

Harry was now shaking in pain. His torso was on fire. Black spots danced at the edge of his vision.

"Merlin, Potter, are you okay?"

Harry didn't respond, just lowered the broom to the ground. Malfoy got off quickly and backed away looking half-shocked, half-embarrassed. Harry collapsed his hands and knees, one hand clutching his chest.

His teammates flew down quickly.

"Harry! Harry!" Ron shouted, running to his side. George ran to his other side and Fred fell to his knees in front of him, trying to get Harry to look at him. Harry's arm gave out and the three Weasleys gently turned him over onto his back.

"I—I can't breathe," he gasped, clutching his ribs. The whole team was looking down at him in horror.

"Out of my way!" yelled Madam Hooch as she pushed through the crowd. She knelt by Harry. "Potter, what happened?"

"It was that damn Bole, when he hit Harry with the Beater club earlier. I think it hurt Harry more than he let on," George explained angrily.

Harry was closing and opening his eyes, trying not to lose consciousness. Madam Hooch ran two fingers along Harry's ribs, pressing lightly. When she got to Harry's left side, he let out a cry.

"What's the matter?" Professor McGonagall asked, pushing through the growing crowd around Harry. Dumbledore was right behind her. Hagrid was coming from a different direction, lifting up kids and setting them aside to clear a path for himself and Hermione.

"Broken ribs," she diagnosed. "We're going to need to get him to Madam Pomfrey quickly. I think it's pressing into his lungs and interfering with his breathing."

Dumbledore conjured up a stretcher underneath Harry which lifted magically to about four feet off the ground.

"Severus, may I ask you to see Mr. Potter to the Hospital Wing? Minerva and I must stay here to present the Cup," Dumbledore asked.

Snape came into Harry's view. He nodded solemnly.

"Professor, maybe we should wait until Harry's better," Angelina started.

"No," Harry said quietly, "go ahead and do it now so we can celebrate tonight. We need the Cup for the party and I'll make sure I'm out by tonight." He gave them a reassuring smile. "Hermione, stay and watch Ron in the ceremony because I want to hear exactly how it went."

Hermione and Ron both looked like they were going to protest but didn't.

"I'll be fine," he insisted.

Snape began walking toward the castle and Harry's stretcher floated after him, leaving everyone behind as they made their way back to be presented with the Cup.

Harry took a few more shuddering breaths before slipping into unconsciousness.

Snape looked down at Harry lying unconscious on the stretcher and quickened his pace. He was still in slight shock. Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy were enemies like he and James Potter had been, that was obvious enough. Snape knew about the nasty comments Draco made to Harry and in the past had purposely waited to open his classroom door until Harry was provoked to do something punishable.

He also knew that Draco Malfoy would have let Harry fall. He knew that James would have let Snape fall, and that he, himself, would have let James fall. No matter how much he told himself that Potter did it for the fame, he knew that it really wasn't true.

Very few people had earned Snape's respect. He could count them on a hand, but for a fleeting second, Snape thought he felt just that toward Harry. He was revolted at the very idea.

'I do not respect James Potter's son. I do not respect James Potter's son,' he mentally chanted as they entered the Infirmary, but he wasn't sure if he believed himself.

Harry woke a little later with bandages wrapped around his torso. Madam Pomfrey saw him awake and put her hands on her hips. Harry smiled.

"I'm thinking of just asking Dumbledore to let me move in here, what do you think Madam Pomfrey?" he joked.

The Medi-witch smiled despite herself. "You might as well. It would save you the trip."

"So when can I leave?"

"Well, your ribs are still fragile. You've broken them before."

Harry nodded.

"Your uncle?"

Harry blushed and nodded once again. She gave him a sympathetic nod.

“Well, they’re healing, but a little slower than they would if it were the first time breaking them. Your lung is bruised as well so that’s healing. I want you to stay the night.”

“But Madam Pomfrey,” he whined, “I feel fine and the Quidditch party is tonight! I can’t miss it, we won the Cup!” He gave her a sad puppy-dog face and she rolled her eyes with a laugh.

“Fine, but you can’t move from that bed until then.”

“Deal!” he said triumphantly.

“Now, I think you have some visitors,” she said opening the door.

The Quidditch team, Neville, Hermione, and Eloise came bustling through.

“Hey, our favorite Seeker is awake!” Katie said cheerfully.

“I’m your ONLY Seeker,” Harry reminded her with a laugh.

“Not the point. You won us the Cup!” she said throwing her hands in the air.

“How are you feeling, Harry?” Hermione asked worriedly.

“Fine. Madam Pomfrey wanted to keep me for the night, but I talked her into letting me out early so I can come to the party.”

“That dive was amazing, Harry!” Angelina said.

“I can’t believe you went after Malfoy. Draco Malfoy. Your worst enemy,” Fred said in disbelief.

“You should’ve let him fall,” Ron murmured.

“Yeah, maybe he’d have gotten some manners knocked into him,” said Alicia darkly.

Harry looked at them incredulously. “He would’ve gotten really hurt! Everyone was distracted. Nobody would have slowed him down like Dumbledore did when I fell off my broom third year.”

Everyone gave him a look that said, “Your point?”

“Well I think you did the right thing,” Hermione said proudly.

“I don’t know. I think that a good bang might have knocked the word ‘Mudblood’ out of his vocabulary,” Ron said. Eloise gave a murmur of agreement.

“You guys, it’s not like I’m trying to be his friend or anything.”

“You just saved his life instead,” said Fred.

Harry rolled his eyes. “I didn’t save his life. I just caught him. It’s not a big deal,” he insisted. Luckily, Madam Pomfrey came along and shooed them all out, saying their time was up and if they wanted their Seeker that night, they had to leave.

They all said their good-byes and left to start collecting food for the party.

A few minutes after they left, the door slowly opened again. Harry looked up curiously and was taken aback. It was Malfoy.

Harry looked around but, sure enough, he was the only one in the hospital wing.

Malfoy closed the door behind him and walked up to Harry’s bed looking unsure of himself.

“Why did you catch me?” he asked accusingly.

“In case you didn’t notice, you fell off your broom,” Harry said with a raised eyebrow.

“So? I wouldn’t have caught you.”

“I know.”

Malfoy paused. He was looking at Harry suspiciously as if trying to figure out what his true motive had been.

“This isn’t going to make me stop...” he began but Harry cut him off.

“I didn’t expect you to stop anything. I don’t expect thanks; I don’t expect you to be nice to me and my friends. I was just...I wasn’t just going to let you fall. Nobody was paying attention and it was a big drop. It was just a reflex, okay?” he said, slightly embarrassed.

“Just trying to play the hero once again then?” he said scathingly. “Make everyone think you’re really noble by rescuing your worst enemy.”

“I’m not very concerned with what people think about me, Malfoy, and I actually try to avoid the whole hero thing since it is both inaccurate and annoying. But Merlin, if you’re going to come in here and make fun of me for this, then you have some serious problems,” Harry said with a glare. Malfoy’s own glare faltered and he looked away, examining the potions that Harry had to take. There was a long silence and Harry was left very confused at why the Slytherin was sticking around.

“Er...Malfoy?” Harry started, trying to snap the blonde back to reality so he would leave.

“I heard you talking with your friends,” he said uncomfortably, picking up a bottle of pain-killing draught on Harry’s nightstand. “This stuff is crap by the way. You have to take so much for such small results.”

“Just now?” Harry asked, ignoring the second half of what Malfoy had said.

Malfoy nodded.

“They weren’t serious about wishing you fell,” he said, unsure of why he even bothered when Malfoy had just told him that he would have let Harry fall.

“Yes they were. But, they were right when they said...when they said you saved my life,” he coughed out, not meeting Harry’s eyes. Harry looked at Malfoy like he had just sprouted wings and claimed to be the messenger of God. “You said it wasn’t a big deal, but I happen to hold my life in very high acclaim. I’d appreciate it if you didn’t undermine it the way you are by saying that it wasn’t a big deal. My life is a very big deal, Potter.”

Harry was very confused. It almost seemed that Malfoy was trying to thank him in his own, high-and-mighty way. But, of course, that was an impossibility. This was Malfoy after all.

“Malfoy, don’t even think about it, okay? I already told you, you don’t owe me and I wasn’t trying to be a hero or anything,” he insisted awkwardly.

“But I don’t understand. Why would you do this if there wasn’t anything in it for you? You hate me. I hate you. There’s got to be a catch,” he said in frustration.

“I don’t like you, but I don’t want you dead,” Harry said in disbelief. “Don’t get me wrong, I think you’re a git who enjoys being cruel to people, but you haven’t exactly done anything punishable by death.”

There was a long pause where Malfoy looked at Harry suspiciously. “I still hate you, you know,” he said as if testing for Harry’s reaction.

“Okay,” Harry said not having expected anything different.

“And you hate me,” Malfoy said as if making that clear.

“I’ll hate you as long as you act like an asshole to me and my friends.”

There was another pause while Malfoy decided to look curiously at Harry and then the wall. Harry was nearly squirming with anxiety. He

almost expected Malfoy to have an alien break out of his stomach and try to eat Harry's brain.

'Okay, no more science fiction movies at the Stensons,' Harry thought to himself.

"What did Madam Pomfrey mean when she mentioned your uncle in connection with breaking your ribs before?" he asked curiously.

Harry stilled. "How long have you been eavesdropping?" he asked annoyed.

"Long enough. What did she mean?" he insisted.

"Nothing," Harry said coldly.

"You live with your uncle, don't you?"

"Mind your own business, Malfoy," said Harry warningly. He didn't like the look on Malfoy's face. The look that said he had pieced things together and understood something that Harry didn't want him to understand.

"Interesting," Malfoy murmured.

"Nothing's interesting," Harry sneered.

"How are your ribs?" he asked changing the subject.

"Fine," Harry said coldly. "Malfoy, don't you go spreading any rumors..."

"I wasn't planning on it," he said, cutting Harry off.

"Well, anyway, I just wanted to say...thanks," he said with much difficulty, looking at his fingernails as he said it. He lifted his eyes to Harry's in a warning gaze. "But if you tell anyone, I'll deny it and call you insane." He then hurried out of the room, closing the door behind him.

Eowyn of Ithilien: LoL. You better be talking facial cheeks! Poor Harry is too innocent for the other. (Though I laughed so hard at that comment I almost fell out of my chair.) I think Harry has major sweetie potential even though he didn't exactly show it off in book 5. I've never seen that movie, but I love water fights. I couldn't resist putting one in. Poor Gin. Her dad's so into Muggles and she just doesn't understand. If you think about it, it would be so hard to explain some things to people who hadn't seen it, like trying to describe color to a blind person. So far, Harry's only carved his initials, but who knows, maybe one day he'll turn the entire bedframe into a work of art, or a list of phone numbers and lude comments. I love your ramblings so review late! Hope you liked the chappy.

Dadaiiro: Yeah, I never really liked Cho. Just a bad vibe or something. Yeah, Snape couldn't pass up the opportunity to badger Harry. Yeah, I loved writing the "Cho gets shut down" scene. It seemed to me that she thought of Harry as inferior in the 4th book so I'm playing that up in this story. I love knocking her off her high horse. Neville and Ginny are going with Ravenclaws, as we will see in the next few chapters. The dance will be fun, in my opinion at least. Lol. You're right, Harry and Ron have come closer in this story, probably because of Harry's cancer. Hard times show you who your true friends are in my opinion and can make you closer than ever. Plus, they both realize they better make the best of their time left together, because they don't have a lot of it. I'm not telling you about the ending, of course, but I love the guessing. Your reviews rock by the way! I love them all.

Temporary Insanity: What's FF8? The topic Gin's helping Harry with is insignificant, just a random school project. That's so cool about your Eng class! I want to do fantasy. Can you imagine studying HP? That would be my dream. Either that or an assignment to write your own story handing using the plot and characters of another book. Lol. I'd so enjoy him this story and saying "Just something I whipped up." I'm glad you liked the reactions. I was nervous about how people would feel about them. I'm so glad to hear from you again. I thought I had lost you and that would have been very tragic since I love your reviews!

SiRiUsLy ObSeSsEd1: Thank you! I don't like Cho either. Haven't since the 4th book, especially don't after the 5th. She's so whiny and arrogant! (Ok, maybe I've looked too much into it, but oh well.) Harry always hit me as a sweetie, though he didn't show it as much in the 5th book, though he did have his cute scenes that made me want to hug him.

Xirleb70: Yay! I'm glad you're enjoying. I wanted Harry to do something different for the dance, and Eloise seemed the perfect candidate since I always felt so bad for her b/c of the 4th book. It just shows how much things can change in a year. LOL that is the question. Will I off Harry? OMG, do you understand how similar our music tastes are? it's crazy! Though I don't know who T.a.T.u is, I love all the others. I was listening to Evanescence while reading your review. Soo weird, but awesomely so. I'm so glad you like my version of Harry! Au revoir~je deteste mon prof de français et la classe aussi!

Terence: Yay! I love Neville. I know, I hate Cho too! This fic isn't romance for Harry, so there will be no coupling, though I must say I am a H/G fan so I couldn't resist some hints at that. Lol, you'll see. I don't have a grudge against all popular girls, only the ones who act like they're God's gift to the Earth and feel free to step all over everyone else. I know many really nice popular girls, unfortunately, this usually isn't the majority of that particular crowd. Oh well. Good thing I believe so much in Karma, it shows up in many ways in this story that aren't apparent yet. Lol. Hope you liked the chappy.

Thundering Lights: Lol I'm glad you're so fond of my version of Harry. I was a little mad at Harry at the beginning of book 5, but after I read it through and had time to reflect, I loved him again. He's just going through a lot of hard stuff and he's only human. My Harry is just what I see as Harry's potential in J.K.'s books. I think that Harry will eventually get over his current attitude and become the Harry we all know he can be! I'm glad you haven't been able to find many clichés in this story, though I must point out the abuse as well. Cliché, but necessary and realistic in my opinion. (Why I am pointing out clichés in my story is beyond me.) And r/h just seems so right. I've been thinking it since book 1. Yeah, I never liked Cho. So I get to bash

her in this story. Lol. I love being an author of fanfiction. Oh yeah, thank you so much for the grammar thing. I'm also a stickler for grammar. If a story's written badly, I can't read it. I was very unsure of this and still am. I always have problems with those two words. I know "effect" is a noun and "affect" is a verb, but I don't know what to use with "taken ____" and that sort of stuff. If you know for certain, I'd adore a grammar lesson.

o Hell o Kitty o: Harry will play Quidditch now. Lol. I love reading! I could spend full days at the bookstore or the library and be totally content. The Stensons don't know about Harry's condition yet, but they will. I'm still working on it as fast as I can, but the next few updates may be slow as I desperately try to make it work. Hope you liked this chappy!

Two2feet: I'm glad you liked the initials. It just seems like something a very bored Harry would do. (Heck, it's what I would probably do if I didn't have a pen and paper for doodles and writing.) In the books, Cho isn't depicted nearly as stuck up or horrible as I'm going to make her. She and Eloise are the two characters I've sort of made my own in this story, and they may be different from J.K.s. It's for that reason that it's AU. Well, hope you liked this chapter!

Horsefan: Thank you! The Stensons will find out, though I'm still working with that scene. Harry's cancer will get worse, but how worse, only time will tell. Fatal? Not? Who knows? Oh yeah...I do! Lol. But shhh....it's a surprise!

Joe: Good assumption! You're quite right. This is not the last of Cho. Glad you liked last chapter!

Phoenix220: Cho isn't such a bitch in the books, just whiny and annoying (in my opinion, I'm so sorry if that offends). This bitchy streak is of my own doing, just as Eloise's character has become more of my own creation. I wrote most of this (inc. Cho's involvement) before book 5, before J.K. had gone into so much depth with her character. At the time, it was more up for grabs. That's why this is AU.

LizhowHP: I never liked Cho either. I'm not sure if I should reveal this fact, but shh...I was a cheerleader before. Lol don't worry, I take absolutely no offense with the cheerleader bashing. I honestly loved the sport. I wanted to be like the ones on tv. Unfortunately, I hated the people on the squad for the most part. They're just trained to think of themselves as superior and only a few of us survived the year mentally undamaged. I got hurt during a game one time and couldn't get up and only one girl came and helped me off the field. She was really nice, but the rest of the team made fun of me, especially since I couldn't cheer for a few months afterwards. I was determined to finish the year out, just to show them I wouldn't quit because of them, but the whole thing turned me off of it and I quit after the year was done. I still believe there are some decent cheerleaders out there though! You're probably wondering where this tangent came from. So am I, actually. Lol.

Dippy: Don't be a lurker! Come out from the shadows! Lol. I love angst too, and drama (obviously lol), but you'll just have to wait to find out the answer to that question. I can't answer so many of your questions without giving anything away! The Stensons will find out. Soon too. I just have to finish working with the scene! I hope you liked this chapter. Keep reviewing! It makes me so happy!

Luinlothana: No problem about the late review. I love them all the same! I need reviews to take my mind off school, so I guess we're in the same boat! I like your ideas and the guessing makes it so fun. I have, of course, already written the end, and I wish I could tell you if you are right or wrong, close or way off, but I can't without spoiling the suspense! Alas, I guess you'll just have to wait. Thanks for your reviews once again. I love them. Hope you liked the chappy!

Also thanks for the reviews from Trapper's Girl, BratPrincess-187, fantagal, A.247, Maximum Poofy-Queen of AU, Rain Warrior, Arctic Wolf2, AmajoS, Em, and Energeezzer.

Author's Note: Hey everyone! Once again, I'm sorry that each chapter is taking a while, but hey, it's still once a week, right? I just have to find rare pockets of time to post and reply to reviews. I'm working on the scenes that need fixing or inserting at every chance I get. Well, at least this chapter's up, right? LOL. Anyways, this chapter is dedicated to The Ever Falling for the very awesome picture. What a great artist! Thank you guys so much for your reviews. I'm shocked that it's over 300 now. I am so happy! In fact, I think I'll have a jam session right now to....hmm....oooh I know! Today's music ain't got the same soul, I like that old time rock and roll-oll-oll-oll. Argh...my boombox (Louise) is skipping again. Switching to some Robbie Williams! Rock DJ. If you can't get a girl but your best friend can, it's time to move your body! LOL. What a randomly awesome song!

Madam Pomfrey let Harry leave a few hours later. He thought about his conversation with Malfoy while he walked to the Gryffindor common room. He prayed that Malfoy hadn't caught on to his home life. It still surprised him that there was a conversation in the first place and he was still slightly doubtful that Malfoy had actually thanked him. It seemed a little too incredible. Maybe Madam Pomfrey's potions had left him a little funny in the head.

He decided not to tell anyone, knowing that Malfoy wouldn't appreciate it. Harry figured if Malfoy had gotten up the guts to actually thank him, then the least he could do was to not blab it to the rest of the school.

He gave the password to the Fat Lady and the portrait swung open. Noise blasted out of the common room as Harry was dragged inside.

"He lives!" yelled Fred who had put an arm around Harry's shoulders. Everyone cheered as Harry walked in.

The common room was jam-packed. Everyone seemed drunk with excitement and joy, and many with Firewhiskey as well. Ron and Hermione raced up to him with huge smiles on their faces.

“How ya feeling mate?” Ron asked.

“Good,” he said watching Angelina climb onto the table.

“Hey everyone, now that our Seeker’s here, we’re going to do the victory drink like we taught you. Come on over guys,” she called to Harry, Ron, and Fred. They made their way through the excited crowd to the rest of the team.

Dean had told Angelina about a tradition he had with his football team when they won a Cup. They had a sort of cheer that they sang. He had taught the team and Angelina had vowed that if the Gryffindors won the Quidditch Cup, that the team would do it.

Katie and George brought over the Cup, which was now filled with Butterbeer. Angelina took a long sip and the crowd all sipped their own drinks along with her. She then shouted out, “My name is Angelina and I know what I got!”

Everyone shouted back, “What do you got?”

“I’ve got a team that’s hotter than hot!” she cheered.

“How hot is hot?” everyone else cheered back with glee.

“Batman and Superman!” she laughed loudly.

“Uh huh, uh huh!” sang the crowd.

“No one can do it like, George can!”

With that, she grabbed George’s hand and pulled him up. He took the cup from her and took a swig of the Butterbeer as she jumped off the table. He repeated the cheer and the crowd did their part.

“No one can do it like, Katie can!”

He hoisted Katie up on the table, jumping off as she took a drink from the Cup as the rest of the Gryffindor house gulped their own drinks and started the cheer again.

Harry thought people would get sick of it as it went on, but he was happy to see that he was wrong. It seemed that the longer it went on, the more enthusiastic everyone got, drinking their drinks and screaming their part at the appropriate times.

Finally, Ron was on the table, yelling the cheer joyously. Harry was the only one left.

“No one can do it like Harry can!”

Harry reached up and grabbed Ron’s hand. Ron pulled him up onto the table and handed him the Cup with a laugh. Harry downed the last of the Butterbeer.

“My name is Harry and I know what I got!”

He finished the cheer with a, “No one can do it like Gryffindor can!” and lifted the cup up high. Everyone broke out into loud cheering and clapping.

He jumped down from the tabletop, handing the Cup to Angelina who hugged it to herself.

“That was a fun little ritual, Dean,” he told his beaming dorm-mate.

“Yeah, that was a great idea!” Ron added.

“No problem. You guys did brilliantly today!”

“Thanks!” Ron said. He turned to Harry, “I’m going to go talk to ‘Mione, wanna come?”

“Nah, I’ll catch up with you later.” He would give those two some time alone.

“Here Harry, have a Firewhiskey,” Seamus said trying to shove a mug into his hand.

“No thanks, Seamus. I’ll pass,” Harry said pushing it away.

“Oh come on Harry, we’re celebrating!” he insisted. Harry smiled but shook his head.

“Thanks but no thanks.”

Seamus shrugged and handed it to someone else.

“Harry, that was wicked dive! I can’t believe you went after Malfoy though!” said Seamus.

“Yeah, that was...that was something,” Dean said, not really knowing what to say about Harry saving someone they all hated.

“But Malfoy!” Seamus insisted. Some others nearby joined the conversation, all telling Harry that he should have let Malfoy dropped.

“Well I think he did the right thing,” Ginny said appearing at Harry’s side holding a Butterbeer. “It’s not his fault he has more maturity than you lot put together.”

“Ouch, that hurt,” Seamus laughed, putting his hand over his heart. Ginny smiled.

“Yeah, I think you lot are a bad influence on me. Us mature people are leaving,” Harry joked. He swung his arm around Ginny’s shoulder and she swung hers around his. They around and began walking away laughing. Harry turned around and stuck his tongue out at Dean, evoking peels of laughter.

Dean laughed and playfully kicked at Harry’s retreating form. “Oh get out of here you two killjoys.”

Harry and Ginny collapsed onto the couch and talked for awhile as the party raged around them.

Eventually, Professor McGonagall came in rolling her eyes and told everyone to get to bed. With that, the Gryffindors reluctantly said goodnight and trudged up to their respective dorms.

The next day at breakfast, Hedwig flew in with a letter from Kota. He had written to tell her about the dance, something he knew she'd love hearing about. He also confided that he didn't know how to dance and confessed his worry about that. He was curious to read her reply. Maybe there would be a "10 steps to dancing" lesson?

He gave Hedwig some bacon and patted her head to give her the hint to leave. Instead she began poking at the other food on his plate. She always came back from the Stensons in a good mood because, not quite used to owl post, they gave Hedwig a lot of positive attention and a bunch of food.

Harry unfolded the letter, some fellow students glancing curiously at the strange lined paper with the three small holes in the side.

Dear Harry,

Wow! A dance! How exciting! What are you going to wear? What kind of music do they play? My last dance was spent trying to keep Bobby Preston's hands from wandering into unwelcome territory. For a science geek, he was quite forward. In the end I had to politely slap him to get the message across. Then he whined and moped around the punch bowl for the rest of the night. I asked this other bloke to dance and he looked at me like I was insane, so I went to find my friend who had had too much alcohol and puked all over my dress! What a bloody disaster!

Anyways, everyone can dance. Just look around at the other guys and copy them. (Of course only mimic those who don't look as if they're being electrocuted.) And of course, don't forget the movies I've shown you with dance scenes! Remember, don't worry about what anybody else thinks. All in all, just have fun!

If possible, send pictures. Show this girl a good time! Have the best time of your life and send report as soon as possible! Ciao!

Love always,

Kota

P.S.. but seriously, If George needs a date still, I'll gladly face Portkey travel again! His freckles are so cute!

Harry laughed and knew that Kota was absolutely serious.

"Hey, George," he said. The redhead sitting across from him looked up. "Remember my Muggle friend, Kota?"

"Of course."

Harry passed him the letter. George looked at him curiously and then took the letter. He laughed toward the beginning and nodded as his eyes skimmed the rest. At the end, his eyebrows shot up, making Harry laugh.

"Never thought I'd see the day where I'd catch you off guard," Harry laughed at George's surprised expression. "Don't feel obligated, but you know, if you don't have a date and don't know who to ask, Kota asks about you all the time."

"Oh really?" he asked his usual mischievous smirk returning.

"Yup, she said you have a..." he paused to remember her exact words, "...a cute, mischievous, impish look' about you. Of course I told her, 'Mischievous? Impish? George? Never!'" he said in fake seriousness. George laughed. "Anyways, she's your age: just turned seventeen."

George nodded approvingly and then looked again at the letter.

"Hmm...a Muggle," he said thoughtfully. "Is that even allowed?"

Harry shrugged. "Would that stop you?"

"Of course not. Rules are made to be broken after all. You know, Harry, this is a brilliant idea. Can I use Hedwig?" he asked excitedly.

"Sure," he said, gesturing to the bird currently eyeing Harry's toast. He tore off a piece and gave it to her. George got out a piece of parchment and began to write a letter to Kota, asking her to come to the dance. Harry wrote his own letter saying that they'd have to talk to the headmaster, but if he allowed it, Harry would meet her in London and take her shopping in Diagon Alley for some wizard dress robes to wear.

They tied the two folded letters onto Hedwig's leg after writing "Open first!" on George's letter. Hedwig flew off, giving Harry an affectionate nip on the ear as she passed.

"Maybe we should talk with Dumbledore to make sure Kota has a way to get here and everything," Harry suggested. George agreed. He stood up and began walking toward the head table. Harry got up and caught up to him. "Right now?" he asked anxiously, wondering if it was very appropriate to interrupt the headmaster during his meal.

"Of course. This is a very pressing matter, Harry." They reached the table and

Dumbledore looked up at them with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Ah, George, not the Weasley I usually see accompanying Harry here. To what do I owe this pleasure?"

"Well, sir, young Harry and I have been discussing a rather important matter," George said, putting an arm around Harry's shoulders.

"Oh really?"

"Yes. You see, we've been contemplating our school's stand on Muggle relations. We are known as a school very tolerable for one's backgrounds, including non-magical ones, correct?"

"Oh yes, that is one of my favorite aspects of our fine institution," Dumbledore said, eyes twinkling brightly.

“So, we were thinking that a perfect way to advertise this fact would be to allow students to invite Muggles to the Hogwarts dance. Last year, it was students from other schools, this year, it could be students from other worlds. Do you see my angle here, Professor?”

“Though I think the Muggle world is not quite as separate from ours as you suggest, I see no problem with you inviting a Muggle to the school dance. May I ask who the fine young lady might be?”

“Thank you professor. She’s a friend of Harry’s, actually. Dakota Stenson.”

“Ah yes, I thought that might be the case. Miss Stenson is welcome here, of course. She seems like a very lovely girl. We’ll arrange a Portkey for her that night and she can spend the night in the fifth year girls’ dormitories, since the dance ends so late. Now, Harry, you look as if you have something you’d like to ask as well.”

“Er...yeah. I was wondering, since we have the day before the dance free from classes and everything, if I could go to Diagon Alley to help Kota buy some dress robes. She wouldn’t be able to get in or know what to buy without me.”

Professor Dumbledore thought about this momentarily. “Yes. Hagrid said he needs to go soon, you could accompany him if you’d like. I know he’d enjoy your company.”

“Thanks Professor, that would be great.”

“Yeah, thanks Professor!” George said merrily. The two walked back to the Gryffindor table and explained what was happening to everyone else.

“Wicked. A Muggle at Hogwarts!” Fred said approvingly.

“George, you’d better keep her in your sight. Who knows what the Slytherins might do to her,” Ginny instructed.

George promised he would make sure the Slytherins didn't get near her. Others agreed to keep near them to help George, sort of as bodyguards.

This dance would definitely be interesting.

"What was I thinking? This is a horrible idea. I'm going to totally screw this up. I'll probably call her by the wrong name or something," Ron ranted nervously as he paced around the dorm, pausing every once in a while to look into the mirror and turn away in disgust. Harry sat on the edge of his bed, trying to calm him down.

"Ron. This is the best idea you've ever had. You won't screw it up. You just need to calm down a bit. Now who are you asking to the dance?" he said calmly.

"Hermione," Ron said with a nod as though reciting information as they studied for a test.

"See, you won't forget her name. I mean, what else would you call her? You've been stuck on her and only her for years. Except for that thing with Fleur, but she was a part Veela so it was totally justifiable," Harry said thoughtfully.

"Not helping Harry," Ron said, exasperated. "Oh Merlin, look at me," he whined, looking into the mirror again, attempting to smooth down his hair. He turned back to Harry with a look of near panic on his face. "What am I doing? She's going to say no. No, she's going to look at me and laugh in my face and then our friendship will be ruined forever. She'd never want to go with me."

Harry stood up and placed his hands firmly on Ron's shoulders, looking him straight in the eye.

"Ron, listen to me, you look fine. You're a great guy and Hermione is crazy about you. Trust me, it's so obvious. She's going to say yes, well, at least if you ask her soon, before someone else gets the chance. She's dying for you to ask her so you just have to go do it," he said seriously.

“Harry, what if she thinks it’s a joke? What if she laughs?” Ron asked with a slightly petrified look on his face.

“It’s Hermione we’re talking about! She’d never laugh at you, especially with something like this because she wants you to ask her! She’s probably going insane wondering if you’re going to ask. I mean the dance is only a few weeks away. So buck up and let’s do this okay?”

Ron gave a shaky nod. “Okay.”

Harry turned Ron around, grabbing his shoulders from behind and marched him to the door and down the stairs, having to push him along every time Ron’s nerves told him to run.

They came to the entrance to the common room. Hermione was sitting on the couch reading. There were a few other Gryffindors around. Ron noticed this and looked doubtful.

“I’ll get rid of them,” Harry whispered. Ron nodded but then froze. He turned around and looked like he was going to run back up the stairs, but Harry blocked his way and grabbed his shoulders.

“I can’t do this,” he hissed.

“Yes you can!” Harry whispered back. He turned Ron around and pushed him into the room. “Hey ‘Mione!” Harry called. Hermione looked up and smiled. Ron gave her an extremely nervous grin back. “Well, I’ll see you two later,” he said as he nudged Ron in the back.

The redhead made his way to the couch and sat down next to Hermione.

“Whatcha reading?” Ron asked in a higher voice than usual.

Harry ran over to the group of third years.

“Hey, uh, we’re having a Prefects meeting in here. Do you think you could leave for about half an hour?” he asked. They rolled their eyes and reluctantly left the common room, grumbling about older kids

thinking they owned the school. With the room cleared out, aside from his two friends, Harry hurried toward the portrait, nearly smacking into Ginny.

"Hey Gin," he said quietly, looking over his shoulder at his two friends on the couch. "Er, let's go outside." He took her arm and began leading her back toward the portrait.

"But I need to talk to Ron," she protested loudly enough to grab the attention of her brother who gave Harry a desperate look.

"Is it something urgent?" he asked quietly.

"No. Is something going on?" She looked at the pair on the couch and then smiled brightly, a look of comprehension dawning on her face.

"We'll talk about it outside," he whispered, dragging a giggling Ginny into the hallway.

As soon as the portrait closed behind them, they both laughed.

"So, he's finally going to ask?" she asked cheerfully, leaning against the wall.

"Yup, well, if he goes through with it," he said in the same happy tone, leaning against the wall next to her.

"It's about time!"

"Yeah, well, it's hard on us guys! Especially in Ron's case 'cause he's liked Hermione for so long and they're friends. He's just worried she won't like him back," Harry explained.

"Well, you asked Eloise right away," Ginny insisted in a slightly strained voice.

"Yeah, but Eloise and I are just going as friends and we both know that, so it's a lot easier, you know?" Ginny looked relieved and her

mood brightened back up. "So, are you going with somebody?" he asked.

"Yeah. A Ravenclaw in my Transfiguration class, but it's the same thing as you. We're just going as friends so it wasn't a big deal."

"See? It's easy for us, but hard for Ron since he cares a lot more about what the answer will be, not that there's a slight possibility that it'll be a no, but he doesn't seem to realize that."

"I can't believe him. Or her for that matter. Are they blind or something? They act like an old married couple!" Ginny laughed, throwing her hands into the air to emphasize her point.

"Yeah, try being best friends with them! I think I'm going to get some ear plugs soon to block out their bickering!"

Seamus and Dean soon came up to go to the dorm.

"Uh, you guys can't go in there right now," Harry said blocking the portrait. The two boys looked at him suspiciously.

"And why not?" Dean asked.

"Well you can go in, but you shouldn't," Ginny said. She shook her head and sighed. "Fred and George were testing out one of their new pranks. A stink bomb. It's horrible. We're trying to keep the portrait closed so the smell doesn't seep out into the hall," she said with apparent sincerity.

"The smell's supposed to disappear in about fifteen minutes. We're just praying that it will or it's going to be a horrible night. Even now, I can't seem to get that awful smell out of my nose," Harry said, scrunching up his face in disgust.

"Yeah, but at least our eyes have stopped watering and I don't feel nauseous at all any more," Ginny said, sounding relieved. Harry nodded in agreement.

This seemed to do the trick for Harry's two dormmates.

“Oh, well I guess we’ll come back in a little bit then,” Seamus said and the two walked off.

As soon as they were out of sight, the pair burst out laughing.

“That was good, Gin!” Harry praised. Ginny took a dramatic bow. “You’re a fantastic liar.”

“Well you went along with it pretty well yourself. I guess we’re just evil,” she said in mock resignation.

“Oh well, what can you do?” Harry asked in a dejected tone. They both started laughing again. They eventually sat down on the floor to guard the portrait entrance for a little while longer, just to give Ron enough time. Harry taught Ginny how to play rock, paper, scissors and thumb war. Colin Creevey appeared at one point and snapped a picture of the two. Harry rolled his eyes and Ginny just laughed.

“One, two, three, four, I declare a thumb wa—AHH!”

As they were starting a new game, the portrait suddenly opened, slamming right into them. Ron and Hermione looked out smiling.

“Ow!” Ginny said with a glare at the two. Harry rubbed his arm where it had hit.

“So...did you two have a nice conversation?” Harry asked slyly from his spot on the floor. Ginny leaned back onto her elbows and simply grinned up at them. Ron’s face grew slightly red, but he was grinning like a maniac. Hermione’s face also blushed pink and she looked shyly at the floor.

“Well, I said yes so you two can quit guarding the entrance,” Hermione said quickly.

“You said yes? Yes to what?” Ginny feigned ignorance to the situation. Harry looked at her and then back at his two friends mirroring Ginny’s expression.

“Did you ask her something Ron?” he asked innocently.

Ron blushed furiously. “Shut it, you two,” he said playfully kicking Harry’s legs which were sprawled out in front of him. “You know perfectly well what we were talking about.”

Harry just laughed and got to his feet. “Oh we’ll stop teasing you guys for now.” He held his hands out for Ginny and pulled her to her feet. She secretly relished the touch.

Harry remembered Ron’s concern that it would be awkward after asking Hermione so he just pulled them back into the common room and launched into telling them about teaching Ginny the two Muggle hand games. Ginny caught on and told Ron what was going on back home, since she had just received an owl from their mother.

In the middle of this, Seamus and Dean came back in, sniffing cautiously. They looked relieved and then made their way up the stairs of the boy’s tower. Hermione and Ron looked at them with curious expressions.

“Hmm...wonder what that was all about?” Hermione wondered allowed.

Harry caught Ginny’s eye and just shrugged. “Who knows. They’re just a little bizarre sometimes.”

Eventually, they all retreated to their dorms. As Harry and Ron got into bed Dean murmured tiredly, “I can’t believe your brothers let off a stink bomb in the common room, Ron.”

“Huh?” Ron asked perplexed. Harry snorted with laughter and Ron quickly figured out what had happened. After Dean’s breathing evened out, Ron whispered, “Harry?”

“Yeah?” Harry whispered back, turning around to face Ron, even though they could only see silhouettes of each other in the darkness.

“Thanks...for everything.”

Harry smiled sleepily and though Ron couldn't see it, he could hear it in Harry's voice. "No problem Ron. That's what friends are for."

A/N: I know the little Quidditch party ritual thing is dorky, but it's something I do used to do at camp when we'd win games. We included the cup when my friend won the surf competition. (I got 4th. So close to a trophy, but so far away. Lol it was still incredibly fun!) I couldn't resist putting it in. It brings me back to my beloved camp days. Damn. It just took me 2 ½ hours to respond to reviews! This is why posting is such an effort. Of course, I love responding to you guys since you guys take your precious time to send me reviews, which I love! Don't worry, I'll respond to you guys no matter how long it takes 'cause you guys are what keeps this story going! On that note, review!

Eowyn of Ithilien: LOL I love the Italian mom thing! Hahaha. I know, at my grandparent's house, my sister and I always swap food to get the stuff we like, otherwise, we dump it into the garden when no one's looking (we eat in the back yard). Yeah, Harry has some serious injury issues. He's really used to hiding them though. I mean, he hid broken ribs and glass in his back for days earlier in the year!! LOL Snape: a Buddhist. I love it! He'd be the worst Buddhist ever, but it's cool. He could walk around in pieces of cloth and bare feet and kiss everyone's foreheads. Then they'd all die of fright. Oh yes, I've seen some very raunchy Harry fics that have made my mouth drop open in shock. But honestly, Harry's just so innocent, I could never see him as a little pimp of Hogwarts. The best of the sweetie potential in book 5 was at dinner with Cho when he tries to grab her hand and she moves it and he grabs the sugar bowl instead. Awww!! How adorable is that! I wanted to just go hug him right then! And he does sincerely offer to help Luna find her things, which I thought was sweet as well. Oh man, some of the religious ones are the worst! I used to go to a Christian school (don't ask me why since I didn't go to church) and some of the girls were so hilariously raunchy. Phew, I don't drink soda. I'm safe. Hope you liked the chapter!

Dadaiiro: Yay! I'm glad you liked the Quidditch game! It's kinda funny that Harry's a celebrity but he hates attention so much! He has some serious self-esteem complexes. Oh yes, I've just finished tweaking the ball scene. It's a fun scene, in my opinion at least. Yeah, this incident has given Malfoy something to think about, what he'll do about it...who knows? Except for me of course. Lol. Cho's not going alone to the ball, as appealing as that would be, since that wouldn't work for my plans. Okay, sounding like an evil scientist. Lol. Harry's still having his dueling lessons, but I'll probably only describe one more so they don't get monotonous. But let's just say he still goes all the time. Malfoy has guessed about Harry's home life. He doesn't know the specifics obviously, but he knows. I like the questioning. I can't answer it or anything, but I like it nonetheless lol. Hope you liked the chapter!

o Hell o Kitty o: YAY!! Thank you for such an enthusiastic response! Ooh, I'm so happy you liked it! Now I'm all hyper with happiness. Don't worry about the time. I know how difficult school is. I used to go to a private school! Then I switched to a public school in the middle of third grade, so I sort of know how you feel. I hope all is going well!

Xirleb70: Oh yes, you must love the strange looks from mothers. Lol, I'm happy I haven't made things too confusing for you! And you're still here each chapter reviewing! The bliss of people reading your writing. I know, poor Harry. But at least he has a fun dance to look forward to! Lol Hope you liked the chappy!

Terence: I know, school's tough! I'm glad you liked the chapter. I think it would be fun in J.K.'s books for Harry to save Malfoy, or do something nice to him. You know, throw him off guard a little. Hope you and Sirius (and the rest of the 11 in his family, or is Sirius the only literary one of the egg carton?) liked the chapter.

Thundering Lights: Thanks for the grammar lesson, it was much needed. No, Draco doesn't have a wizard's pact with Harry, but the incident has given him something to think about. (Is a wizard's pact something in the actual books, or just something that's been implanted in our minds through fanfiction? There's so many things like that, that I honestly don't know. There are scenes that I don't

know if they were in the book or in some fanfic I've read. Lol that's why you've got to love it.) Good calculations. Yes, it's definitely getting close to the end of the year, but a lot can happen in a short time. This fic is kinda funny because the first few months took about a paragraph to write whereas the last few months are taking an extreme amount of chapters. I hope school's going alright for you.

Maximum Poofy-Queen of AU: Yeah, Quidditch games are fun b/c they always attract trouble for Harry. LOL. I hope you liked the chappy!

Charley4: I'm glad you like my story! My reviewers usually start out with the "there's no way he'll die" attitude. Then it changed to the "he's not going to die, right?" Now most seem to be thinking that it's looking bad for Harry. Only I know what will happen and I love it! I'm so happy you're enjoying this. I hope you stick with it!

A.247: *bows* oh thank you. Thank you. *blows kisses and wipes away tear* Malfoy will be an interesting character in this, not a major one, mind you, but interesting.

Joe: Oh yes, definite food for thought for Malfoy. Yes, Harry is mature in many ways, but immature in other ways as well. That what makes him so fun! Snape is really struggling with his feelings about Harry. (Not in a slashy way! I mean in general, totally not even thinking about that, way.)

Arctic Wolf2: No, Draco's not going to tell the school. He has no proof and then it might come out about why he was in the hospital wing in the first place. It has given him food for thought though. When will Harry tell the Stensons? Soonish. lol A few chapters I'd say. No, Dakota and Harry are not going to be a couple. They have a brother/sister type attitude toward each other for sure. I hope you liked this chapter!

BratPrincess-187: I'm glad you like the Harry/Malfoy interaction in the last chapter! Hope you liked the chappy!

SubliminalMsgs: Really? Thank you!! I'm glad you like the cliffies! Thank you thank you thank you for adding me to your favorites list! *Jumps around squealing.*

Theauthorthatwrites: Hope you got my email. I'm working on the challenge of getting it done! If you haven't got my email, email me. Umm...yah. lol. Where are you going? I don't know how I'd live without . I hope you liked the chapter.

LilynJamesAAF: Lol~ yes, many people are feeling my pain with school right now! I'm so excited that you like my story! This is such an awesome review! So enthusiastic! Enthusiastic reviews make me enthusiastic about writing and posting and dancing in my room.

ShellRae007: Thanks! Lol. I honestly never even thought that about the chapter title. Oops. I hope you continue to like my story!

ParanoiaIn2005: I'm glad you decided to give my fic a second chance as well! The first 2 chapters can probably turn people away since I'm sure at least I would think it was going to be a Mary Sue fic. I can't believe you read the 20 chapters straight through! That's encouraging. I hope other people will get past the extra characters and read it as you have.

Crystalheart81: Thank you! I post new chapters about once a week now that school has started. Yes, Malfoy is a fun character to play around with.

Star*dust: I know, he's such a sweetie and life keeps throwing all these hard things at him. I'm glad you liked Ron's character! His friendship with Harry is one of the main parts of the story! I hope you like this chapter!

Fantagal: Lol, yes unfortunately, I'm evil. Poor Harry can attest to that. Yes, do go visit him, I'm sure he'd love a visitor. I'd visit him but I think he's a little mad at me right now for beating him up all the time. Oh wait, he just told me he's not any more since I threw him a really cool party and he got to play some fun games with Ginny. I'm going to go bug him and ask how he feels about his life and stuff. Hope you liked the chapter!

Also thank you to shdurrani, lizhowHP, ckat44, and GrimmyD, for their wonderful and continuous reviews! You guys all rock!

Author's Note: Ugh...I babysat the demon children from hell last night. I asked the older kid to clean up his mess and he said no. I then told the kid to clean it up and he looks at me coldly and says, "I thought I said I won't." He better be glad I don't have homicidal tendencies. I wanted to tell him he was acting like Dudley Dursley but didn't think he'd understand the reference. Too uncultured and all. Then I tried to carry the four-year-old to bed, since he fell asleep on the couch, and he woke up and practically tried to claw my eyes out screaming that he wanted his mum. The only good one was the girl, who was sick and now I'm sick. Bloody fantastic. I also have all these random scratches all over my ankles where the older kid kept driving his remote control car into me until I finally locked it in the cupboard where he couldn't reach. And he told the girl that was over that she had to clean the mess he made because "girls are supposed to be the ones to clean." Excuse me? Oh he did a lot of cleaning after that. Of course his little brother told me that all girls (except for his mum) should die. What is wrong with these kids? AHH!! Alright, calming down and attempting to ignore the fact that my whole throat seems oddly smaller than it's supposed to be.

* * * * *

In the following days, Harry was shocked to find that Eloise had been right about one thing. Apparently, Harry Potter was the hot item for the dance. It soon got around that he had turned down Cho, which seemed to open a floodgate for other invitations. Girls from many houses and years were asking him to the dance, each disappointed to hear that he was no longer on the market.

Sirius had been coming to visit Harry about three nights a week and on weekends ever since he had found out about Harry's cancer. Harry loved the time they spent together, but it also stressed him out slightly since Sirius always shot him sad looks when he thought Harry wouldn't notice. He was glad the ball was coming up. It was something that would take his mind away from the fact that he didn't have that much time left.

Meanwhile, Hermione and Ron kept blushing every time they saw one another.

Hermione had confided in Harry that she was relieved that Ron wasn't daft enough to wait until the last minute this year to ask someone, which was Hermione's way of saying how happy she was that Ron asked her and not some other girl. Hermione had been ecstatic to hear that Harry had asked Eloise. She had hugged him and squealed in delight, exclaiming how sweet it was.

Now it was the day before the dance, and everyone had the day off of classes. After breakfast, Harry met up with Hagrid in Dumbledore's office, dressed in his Muggle clothes. They used his office fire to floo to the Leaky Cauldron. Harry waited outside for Kota, while Hagrid decided to have a drink inside. He felt awkward just standing there while everyone around him seemed to be rushing to get one place or another. He had nothing else to do but people-watch, having to quickly avert his eyes whenever they felt his gaze.

"Harry!"

Harry looked up to see Kota walking quickly toward him waving. He waved back. Kota greeted him with her usual friendly hug.

"So where are we shopping?" she asked eagerly, looking up from the big book shop to the record shop.

"Kota, what do you see between the book shop and the record store?"

She raised an eyebrow. "A brick wall."

"All right, then you're just going to have to trust me," he said. He took her wrist and led her to the Leaky Cauldron. When he opened the door she gasped.

"Oh my God! Where did that door come from?" Then she looked inside and smiled in wonder. "Woah."

Harry led her inside and over to Hagrid, of whom she seemed slightly afraid, especially when he stood up. "Well hey there," he said with a friendly smile.

“Uh, hi,” Kota said, discreetly taking a step back.

“What time should we meet you Hagrid?” Harry asked.

“Be back ‘ere ‘round four. Don’ worry if yer a little late, but don’ make me worry,” he said cheerfully, sitting back down to finish his drink.

The two said goodbye and went out back. Harry tapped the correct brick. Kota gasped as the doorway opened up to reveal a bustling Diagon Alley.

Harry led her to Madam Malkin’s, prying her away from various store windows, promising to let her explore after getting her robes. He wasn’t sure how long it took for girls to shop, but he’d heard frightening tales of girls spending hours in one shop. (Hermione had pointed out that Harry and Ron did this in the Quidditch shop, but they had insisted that it was an entirely different situation.)

Kota watched in awe as various wizards and witches being measured by just the measuring tape.

“This place is amazing, Harry. If I was ever doubting your sanity with this whole wizard thing, my doubts are now completely dashed,” she said excitedly.

“And disappearing from your home and appearing in a castle by touching a feather wasn’t enough to convince you?” he asked with a chuckle. She just made a face at him. “Ooh mature. And I thought you were supposed to set a good example for me,” he said with an exaggerated sigh.

Kota ignored him and ran her hands along the robes hanging on the racks.

“I can’t believe you wear these, Harry. I just couldn’t see you in them,” she gushed, holding out some particularly hideous ones with a laugh.

“Well I don’t wear those,” he said rolling his eyes. “I look absolutely smashing in my robes thank you very much,” he joked, puffing out his chest and flicking his hand.

“You’d look like a girl in a dress!” she teased.

“I do not look like a girl in my robes! I look like a perfectly formidable wizard in my robes,” he said indignantly.

“You do realize that formidable means menacing.”

“Damn. I thought it meant proper. Fine a reputable wizard then. Take that.”

“Spell reputable for me Harry,” Kota asked innocently. Harry glared at her.

“You suck.”

Kota just laughed. They always joked that they were smarter than the other was. Kota usually won.

“May I remind you that I haven’t been to Muggle school since I was ten? Anyways, that’s not the point.”

“So what is the fashion for school dances?” She pulled out some bright orange robes with a high, frilly collar and wiggled her eyebrows.

“Yup, that’s what the girls wear,” he said seriously. Kota looked horrified.

“Oh please tell me you’re kidding.”

“Of course I’m kidding.” He grabbed her wrist and led her over to another rack of girls’ dress robes. “These are what most people wear, but hey, if those neon orange robes were just calling to you, then by all means, knock yourself out.”

“Ooh, I like these. They’re so strange, but I like them,” she said wistfully, pulling different colors and styles from the racks.

“Harry, I want to see you in robes. You’re trying some on so I can see,” she demanded once her arms were laden with a decent sized pile of clothes.

“You’ve seen me in my school robes,” he protested.

“Those are just black though and they don’t really look like these. I want to see you in dress robes,” she argued back.

“You’ll see me in them tomorrow. Will one day kill you?” he groaned.

“Yes it will. I refuse to try these on unless you try some on,” she said stubbornly.

“So, don’t try them on. Just go to the dance in your knickers. I’m sure that’ll grab George’s attention.”

Kota swatted him lightly with a hanger.

“Fine, I’ll try some on you weirdo,” he said, grabbing some boys’ dress robes that looked his size.

“Ooh a ‘weirdo.’ I’d be truly hurt if I was still five,” she said with a roll of her eyes.

“Well I just assumed since you still have an IQ of a five year old, you’d have the mentality of one as well,” he teased as they make their way to the dressing rooms.

“Want to talk IQ? Spell and define idiom.” “You’re an idiom,” he murmured, causing Kota to burst out laughing. “Well, Miss Smarty-Pants, define and spell Petrificus Totalus.”

“All right, enough with the vocabulary lesson, let’s try these on,” she said, pushing Harry into the dressing room next to hers. Harry quickly changed out of his Muggle clothes and pulled the robes over his head.

“Uh, Harry, do these go over your clothes or not?” she called from the next dressing stall.

“No. I usually wear my school robes over my Muggle clothes, but dress robes you definitely wear instead of regular clothes,” he called back over. He heard a squeal of delight.

“Okay, Harry, I’m coming out. I need your opinion.”

Harry stepped out of his stall to face Kota. She was wearing dark teal robes that fit her pretty well, just slightly too long.

“Those look good, you’ll just need a few inches taken off.”

“Ooh, Harry, you look so cute!”

“Don’t you mean too manly and handsome for words?” he joked. Kota burst out laughing a little too hard.

“You. Look manly,” she laughed clutching a stitch in her side. Harry turned around and looked into the mirror. He had been joking, but he hadn’t realized it was that much of a joke. He was starting to feel self-conscious. Didn’t he look okay?

“What? What? Oh Merlin, please tell me I don’t look like a girl,” he moaned.

“Harry, calm down, I was just kidding. You look great. By the way...‘Oh Merlin’?” she asked with a raised eyebrow.

Harry shrugged. “Wizard thing.”

Kota tried on the rest of her robes, and they both decided on the original dark teal ones. When they were both back in their Muggle clothes, Kota ran back and grabbed two pairs of the hideous neon orange robes. The two crammed into one dressing room, and laughed hysterically as they each tried on the robes over their clothes.

“You’re head looks like a pearl in an oyster,” Harry said quietly, not wanting to be overheard making fun of the store’s clothes.

“That collar looks like what they put on dogs after they’ve been neutered,” Kota whispered through laughs. Harry doubled over at this and they ended up both sitting on the floor, wiping away tears and gasping for breath, their fits of laughter starting each time they caught each other’s eye or the reflection of themselves in the mirror. They laughed even more hysterically when they saw an elder man pick them back up off the rack after they had returned them and had to stifle their sniggers with their hands.

Kota had to get them altered and immensely enjoyed watching the measuring tape zoom around her. The alterations were done swiftly and the two got in line to pay.

At the register, Kota pulled out her Muggle money and began to hand it over, but Harry caught her hand and pulled it back.

“They don’t take Muggle money here, Kota,” he informed her. “Anyways, I’m paying for them. Think of it as an early birthday present.” He ignored her protests and pulled out a sack of galleons, sickles, and knuts, handing over the appropriate amount and letting Kota delightfully examine the rest.

They made their way out of the store and toward Fortescue’s Ice Cream Parlor.

“Are you sure you don’t fancy a plate of raw liver, Kota?” he asked, pointing out a stand that was selling just that. Kota looked disgusted and made gagging sounds.

“Not for all the money in England.”

Harry felt a tugging on his arm and turned around to see a young witch, probably about seven years old, looking up at him in awe.

“Are you Harry Potter?” she asked in amazement. Kota looked confused. Harry shifted uncomfortably, but couldn’t bring himself to lie to the young girl.

“Er...well, yes as a matter of fact. I guess I am,” he said with an embarrassed smile.

“Can I, I mean may I please see your scar please?” she asked, trying to hide her excitement. Harry lifted up his fringe to reveal his scar. The girl stared at it in wonder.

“Harry, what’s going on? Do you know her?” Kota asked in puzzlement.

The girl looked up at her in surprise. “He’s the Boy-Who-Lived. He defeated You-Know-Who a bunch of times. My mummy and daddy say he’s a hero.”

Kota stared at Harry who blushed crimson and avoided her gaze.

“What, so Harry here, he’s famous then?” she asked the little girl.

“Oh yes, very much so,” she said, nodding enthusiastically. She turned around as a couple walked out of a store. “Mummy, Daddy, come here! It’s him! It’s...”

“Shhhh...” Harry interrupted before she could say his name too loudly. He didn’t really fancy being mobbed at the moment. She looked up at him curiously. When her parents came she jumped up and down with excitement.

“It’s Harry Potter, Mum and Dad. It’s really him! He’s got a scar and everything!”

Harry’s face burned.

“Are you really?” the man asked in amazement. Harry showed him his scar with a small shrug.

“Merlin, you really are,” the woman gasped. “What does You-Know-Who look like?”

“Don’t ask him that Marlene!” her husband scolded, as if afraid they’d frighten Harry off.

“It’s okay,” Harry assured him. “He’s really ugly.”

The man laughed and clapped Harry on the back. "I'll bet he is, my boy. You're a real hero, you know that?"

"No, I'm not. Really. I'm just lucky," Harry insisted.

"Lucky doesn't make people risk themselves to save other people. Nope, you're definitely a hero," the woman said fondly as her daughter rifled through one of their bags, pulling out a small book. It was a diary.

"May I please have your autograph?" the young girl asked shyly, holding up her diary and a quill from her mother's purse. Harry glanced at Kota who was looking at him in astonishment. Though he had once promised himself never to give out autographs like a big-headed celebrity, he couldn't turn down the little girl.

"Sure, he said, smiling at her warmly. He squatted down so he was face to face with the girl and gently took the new diary, opening it to the first page. "What's your name?" he asked kindly.

"Sarah," she said softly, biting her lip shyly.

"Sarah. That's a pretty name."

The girl beamed at him, showing the gap where her front tooth was missing.

Sarah, he wrote, never lose that gorgeous smile. –Harry Potter

He handed the book back to the girl, who quickly read what he had written and beamed even brighter. She hugged the book to her chest and quickly leaned forward and gave Harry a quick kiss on the cheek before running behind her mother who laughed fondly.

"Thank you so much. I think you've just made Sarah's day," she said as Harry stood up.

“Just so you know, we never believed any of that rubbish that Rita Skeeter published, or that garbage in the tabloids. We knew you weren’t crazy. It’s a shame about your old girlfriend, though. Can’t believe she was playing you like that,” the man said.

“Hermione was never my girlfriend. She’s just one of my best friends. In fact, she’s dating my other best friend, Ron Weasley. She got a lot of awful Howlers and such over that article and it wasn’t even true,” Harry said sadly.

“Then is this your girlfriend?” he asked, nodding toward Kota.

“No, this is my Muggle friend, Dakota Stenson. I don’t have a girlfriend, and if you ever see an article about me having a girlfriend or something, it’s probably not true, especially if it’s in the tabloids. They just like to cook up fantastic stories about me to sell magazines,” Harry said, hoping the man would take his words to heart and perhaps enlighten other people to this fact as well.

“Of course. That’s what I always try to tell people,” the woman said.

“Well, it was nice meeting you, but we really have to go,” Harry said.
“Goodbye, Sarah.”

The young girl waved shyly at him from behind her mother’s legs as he and Kota walked off.

Once they were out of sight, Kota grabbed Harry’s arm. “You’re famous?” she asked incredulously.

“Er...in a sense...hey look, there’s a goblin!” he said, trying to get the focus off of him. Kota didn’t take the bait though.

“And you didn’t tell me this, why?”

“It’s not a big deal, honestly. I don’t like it really, so I don’t bring it up. It’s more trouble than it’s worth. I’m not all that famous anyways.”

“So what if I yelled your name and pointed at you right now?” she asked.

“Don’t even think about it,” he growled. Looking around to make sure nobody was overhearing their conversation.

“Well you’re going to tell me why you’re famous now, right?”

Harry sighed. “Do you want the short version or the long version?”

“Short version,” Kota said decisively.

“All right. There’s an evil wizard who has tried to kill me many times starting from when I was one year old, and through many flukes, much stupidity on my part, and pure luck, I’ve managed to beat him or escape from him about four times,” he said simply. Kota gaped at him.

“Okay, I’ve changed my mind. The long version might be better.”

Harry sighed. “Fine. I’ll tell you my life story over ice cream, okay?”

“Okay!”

They therefore spent the last few hours of their trip licking ice cream as Harry told Kota the longer version of why exactly he was famous.

A/N: I know the chapter was kind of short, but the next one is the dance and is very long! I couldn’t cut it off anywhere else! Anyways, sorry if my review responses are somewhat short and few, but I’m not feeling oh so well and it’s the only way I’ll get out this chapter tonight. I’m really sorry!

Eowyn of Ithilien: Magical parchment losers. Brilliant. I think it’s weird they don’t have lines on their paper! How do they survive? I’ve never seen Queer Eye for the Straight Guy, but it sounds hilarious. I never knew that about the party scenes in T.V. shows! That’s so wicked! I’ll have to pay close attention next time I watch one. No

lollipop trees in the back yard, but strangely enough, stockings have seemed to grow! Oh wait, that's just my grandma being crazy and putting old panty hose in her plants as fertilizer. I'm starting to think she's losing it. Wonder why. I've never seen Pokemon, but the 4-year-old kid I was babysitting yesterday told me that Pokemon were going to kill all the girls in the world, including me and the little girl that was there as well. I love your Pikachu pimp idea though!! Hope you liked the chapter!

Dadaiiro: Ooh...you think the ritual idea had style? Just like Dumbledore! My FAVORITE line from book 5 is when the picture says "You know, Minister, I disagree with Dumbledore on many counts...but you can't deny he's got style..." (p.623) LOL I love it!! Dumbledore is just cool like that! He just knows! B/c hey, he's got style!! *Hysterical fit of laughter* Alright, I'm done. What George wrote to Kota will remain a mystery forever MUAHAHAHA. Just use your imagination. Oh yes, Ginny loves Harry, Ron and Hermione love each other, and Harry doesn't really know what's going on with himself. I'm glad you like my writing!! Ooh, happy!

Siriusly Obsessed1: I honestly never intended for the Stensons to play such a big role in this fic. They were going to disappear after the spell was done at Christmas. I was really surprised when people started telling me they wanted more of the Stensons. I then went back and inserted a bunch of scenes. (And am still doing so!) I'm glad you like them! It makes things more fun if I can include them! I hope it doesn't become too much with this chapter and the ball and their reaction and all. Yeah, Ginny still has it for Harry, but it's more under control. I loved Ginny in the fifth book! She's turning out like the twins and I approve very much. (Love Fred and George!!) Anyways, hope you liked the chappy!

Terence: Yay! I'm glad you liked the giddy fun ritual! Honestly, it's so much fun! We did it in a pizza restaurant near camp at about 10:00 at night and the waiters joined in! It was great! Well glasses are cool! I want a pair because they would make me look classy. I went to the glasses store near me with my friend to get her subscription filled and there was a section of Harry Potter glasses for kids! HP is great because it makes kids with glasses feel really cool. They were running around saying "I'm Harry!" "I'm Hermione!" 'Course I didn't

mention to the girls that Hermione doesn't wear glasses. It was still cool though. I'm so sorry for your fun and merriment. I'll just go hide now. Lol. Thanks for the encouragement from both you and Sirius!

Molly Morrison: I can't believe you read this whole thing in one afternoon! I know exactly what you mean of doing stuff instead of homework. (currently ignoring own homework while writing reviews) I'm so happy you like my story and that it made you cry! (as weird as that sounds). I hope you keep reading!!

LillynjamesAAF: What does AAF stand for? Sorry, but I'm really curious! Lol. Are you more of a H/H fan? I have a fun H/H story in my favorites. It's #6 I think. I like H/G but there aren't many good H/G fics out there! Sigh. I'm glad you haven't let it ruin this story though! Yay! I'm more than happy to respond to reviews! It's so fun because I feel like I know some of my readers really well now, and of course, I get to respond to your comments about the story. And a final note: a little insanity makes life more fun. Unless you're a serial killer I guess. Hmm..

Catiechan: Oh Sirius is around, I just haven't really been making it an issue b/c he just comes around to chat and stuff. Okay okay, so I should have mentioned that a long time ago. Thank you for reminding me. I just went back and added something about it at the beginning of the chapter. You want more Sirius? Alright, I'll see what I can do. If there's another Sirius scene before the climax, know it's for you! Oh Voldie's just smoldering. Lol um that didn't really make sense but oh well. He's plotting and all that fun stuff for now. Hope you liked the chapter!

Thundering Lights: Ah yes, you all decided that the Stensons will know. I am therefore, painfully making my way through the "reaction scene" but I'm finally making some headway! YAY! I spend all my free time (well the free time not spent reading other peoples' fics) thinking about it, but I have found myself just adding and tweaking other scenes, procrastinating the infamous one. But I'm almost finished with it now. LOL firewhiskey being the cure for his cancer? That would be hilarious. Watch him become a raving drunk. Oh, poor squirrel, I hope it was okay!

Syvixxe: Really? I didn't know there were so many other stories about Harry with terminal illnesses out there. Well I'm glad you like mine! This fic doesn't really pair Harry with anyone, but there are definitely some hints at H/G, they just won't get together in this fic. Yeah, the immediate 'nice Snape' stuff always seems random to me. Some good homework distraction is good for everyone in my opinion. I am of course the world's greatest procrastinator. Oh well. Hope you liked the chappy!

Two2Feet: Good guess Sherlock! I'm glad you liked the H/G interaction! Hope you liked the chapter!

Fantagal: Ron's so cute. So many questions! So many answers I can't give! Crazy is interesting. I got a 5 out of 20 on my English test. (I didn't know what disjunction meant or what he was asking in 3 out of 4 questions. Sigh.) I hope you do better on yours.

Arctic Wolf2: No H/D. I've read some fantastic ones, but doubt I could ever write it. This is more H/G but it more hints at it. They unfortunately will not start dating. But I am writing an H/G fic that I will one day post I hope. There's not enough quality H/G fics out there!

ParanoialN2005: Harry is such a cutie. Lol. I know, I absolutely adore the twins. My friend is going to marry Fred and I'm going to marry George. At least that's what we decided four years ago and still stick to it. (the book twins though, not the movie twins because we both majorly disapproved. Not only were they totally not how we pictured, they weren't even funny! They had no lines!!) Anyways, most people who are going to know about Harry's cancer know (they're trying to keep the information from getting out b/c of old Voldie) but the Stensons will find out soon enough. Never fear!

LizhowHP: *Pats your head* It's okay. There will be more Harry torture. I promise. You'll have some wonderful sickness and pain chappys in the future. Just be patient. Here, have a cookie to tide you over. Lets just say I was working on this fic when I was babysitting last night and took some of my frustration toward the devil children out on Harry. Happy?

Maximum Poofy-Queen of AU: Are you okay? Are you still mad? Were you pissed at something I did? If it was something I did, I'm sorry! If not, I'm still sorry. Feel better!

Theauthorthatwrites: I'm so sorry I didn't do what I said I would for you by this weekend! I tried, I really did, but it's just not ready! I will still take you up on this, but I'll have to extend the deadline a bit. Sorry! I'm still working on it though! I'll let you know when it's ready!

Temporary Insanity: hmm...fun insinuations! Not correct unfortunately, but fun nonetheless. I never thought of it that way! Lol.

Xirleb70: Of course I know Gizmo! I grew up on that movie! (Sadly enough) Don't worry, dance is very near! *cough next chapter cough*

Also thanks to o Hell o Kitty o, Luinlothana (lol you predicted this chapter! I'm glad you liked the Harry/Malfoy scene from ch20), Trapper's Girl (yeah, this story switches moods a lot. Bob Seiger rocks!), phoenix220 (well, I have to put in the slow scenes to make the story better and to emphasize the exciting scenes. Plus, I may or may not be procrastinating as I frantically try to write certain scenes. *wink*), A.247, Alena (Thanks! Draco has much to think about), Joe (glad you like the Kota/George thing), Grimmy D, blackenedsoul, ckat44, and Rain Warrior. You guys rock!

Author's Note: ALL CHO LOVERS: TURN BACK NOW! Her bitchiness is coming out now, but hey, I said it was AU so I get to make her bitchy since I don't like her! LOL

Wow, the last chapter got quite mixed reviews. To those of you who didn't like it, I'm très sorry for the disappointment, and I bring you gifts of a Hogwarts ball for compensation. For all those who did like it, this is your gift of thanks. LOL. Uh oh, now I've built this chapter up way too much. Hope you all like it very much.

This chapter is dedicated to those who put me on their favorites lists. It means a lot to me. I won't list everyone's pennames, but I know who you all are (not to sound creepy or anything, but it lists them in my log in thing, so I checked it out) and want to thank you so much! As corny as it sounds, I really can't express my gratitude enough. You guys rock! So here's the chappy. Hope you all enjoy!

Oh yeah, and one last note I have to say, at my school, a club got their shirts and it says "Helping the community one Muggle at a time." How cool is that? I wanted to have a t-shirt but I'm not part of the club. Damn. :(Oh well, a girl can dream.

It was, at last, the day of the dance, getting closer and closer to the time it would actually start. The day went very quickly, the whole school buzzing with excitement for the ball that night.

Finally, it was time for everyone to get ready. Seamus and Dean were going with Parvati and Lavender, while Neville got a date with a Ravenclaw. They were all out the dorm early, saying they were meeting their dates at dinner, leaving Ron and Harry. Harry wasn't very nervous. It was true that he was uncomfortable dancing, but he didn't feel as if he had to impress anyone. Unlike the previous year, he wasn't going to be put under the spotlight so the pressure was off. Ron, on the other hand, was absolutely flustered. He couldn't stop pacing and trying to fix every little detail about his appearance.

"Harry, are you sure I look all right?" Ron asked for the hundredth time. Harry sighed.

"You look fine Ron, for the billionth time. Don't worry; Hermione must think you're good-looking. Merlin knows she can't like you for your personality." Ron laughed and threw a pillow at Harry who grinned to show he was joking.

"I can't believe Fred and George got me these robes. Did I tell you about their private investor in their joke shop? Some bloke gave them a bunch of money. They won't tell us who though, said he wants to remain anonymous. What moron would give those two money?" Ron said straightening his new dress robes again. Harry couldn't help but laugh.

"Hmm...sounds like a good investment to me," Harry said attempting to suppress a grin by biting his bottom lip. "Now budge over. You've been hogging the mirror for half an hour."

"Have not," Ron said indignantly, stepping out of the way. Harry quickly looked himself over.

"Oh wonderful, you two look so smart!" the mirror exclaimed, very excitedly. "And you should wear green more often, young man, it brings out your eyes. Too bad there isn't something to do about that hair." Harry rolled his eyes, which did stand out spectacularly. He had long ago given up explaining to a mirror that his hair just didn't lay flat and would always remain messy looking. Besides, Harry had grown to like it that way.

The two boys went down to the common room to wait for Hermione, Ron nervously smoothing his robes.

"Ron, you'd better quit that or you're going to rub a hole right through them."

"Shut it, Harry."

Finally, Hermione and the rest of the fifth year Gryffindor girls came down all looking nervous and giggly. Ron began blushing and grinning upon seeing Hermione, who looked even more stunning than she did the previous year.

Harry didn't notice the girls looking him up and down very approvingly, not including Hermione who only had eyes for the redhead standing next to him.

"Y-you look great!" Ron stammered. The girls giggled making Ron blush. Hermione shushed them.

"You look good too, Ron," she smiled. She appeared very calm and collected, but Harry could see hints of nervousness that only he could notice.

"All right you two lovebirds, let's go. Eloise is meeting me outside." He succeeded in making his two friends blush and received two punches on his arm.

They were leaving the portal when the whispering behind them stopped enough for Parvati to yell, "Save me a dance, Harry!" Hushed giggles immediately followed. It was Harry's turn to blush. He was surprised, especially because of the lousy date he'd made the previous year.

"Er...all right," he said lamely and rushed out of the common room.

They were to meet Eloise at a previously designated staircase. She looked nice in her light purple robes. As they approached, they heard some Slytherin girls teasing the poor Ravenclaw.

"What are you all dressed up for? You can't actually be going to the dance!"

"You know, most people go with dates."

"Nobody wants your ugly face to spoil the mood," they taunted.

"I have a date," she replied. Harry could hear her voice wavering and could tell she was getting upset.

"Oh really? Who's that, Filch?" one said haughtily.

Harry decided it was his time to enter.

“Hey Eloise, ready?” he said, pretending he hadn’t heard. She looked immensely relieved. “You look great,” he added, causing her to blush.

“So do you.”

“Wait, you’re going with him?” one asked Eloise, mouth hanging open.

“But I thought Cho Chang asked you, not to mention about half of the Hogwarts female population as well!” another asked in shock.

“She did, but luckily my first choice had already said yes,” he said indicating Eloise. “Shall we?” he asked, putting his arm out for Eloise. She smiled and hooked her arm through his.

“Let’s,” she said with a smile. The two walked off toward the Great Hall, following Ron and Hermione.

The Great Hall looked spectacular. Thousands of candles burned above their heads, bobbing up and down as they floated along. The night sky was cloudless with stars sparkling silver among the golden candle flames.

“Harry!”

Harry turned around to see Dakota waving at him, linked onto George’s arm. She looked extremely nervous, and for good reason. Tons of people were staring at her, having heard the rumors of George’s Muggle date. She looked good, her hair up in a girlish hairstyle with curls hanging down around her face. She was kept looking around in awe, especially at the floating candles and the ceiling.

“Hey Kota, you look great!” he said.

“Thanks,” she said, ruffling his hair fondly.

“Oh thanks,” he said sarcastically, trying to smooth it back down. “As if it wasn’t messy enough.”

Harry quickly introduced everyone that didn’t know each other and sat down across from Hermione and Ron. Eloise sat on one side of him and Kota sat on the other, George on her other side.

“How you doing?” he whispered.

“Everybody’s staring at me. Am I doing something wrong?” she asked nervously.

“No, don’t worry about them. They’re fascinated with you,” he laughed. He and George introduced her around. Many of the students hadn’t actually met a Muggle before and asked many questions.

“Jeez, how do you live without magic? I could never do it!”

“What do you learn in school? Is your school like ours?”

“What do you do for fun?”

“What do you get for presents?”

“You’ve never seen Quidditch? Holy crap! You haven’t lived!”

Kota seemed to have a lot of fun answering the questions, feeling more at ease. She looked very skeptically about ordering into her plate. She jumped when it appeared and touched it warily with a fork to make sure it was really there, much to the students’ delight.

Even Nearly Headless Nick came to greet Kota, coming out of the table right in front of her. She screamed and nearly jumped out of her seat, but Harry grabbed her arm laughing.

“Bu-bu what the? He...the table...he’s see-through!” she said, eyeing Nick warily. Sir Nicholas crossed his arm and made a “humph” sound.

“Most ghosts are see-through, miss. It is quite rude to have your mouth open so widely,” he said indignantly.

“Come on, Nick,” George said amusedly, “you know she’s a Muggle. How did you think she’d react? She’s probably never seen a ghost before.”

“She probably doesn’t even believe in ghosts,” Hermione added, trying to soothe Nick.

“Well, I’m sorry I frightened you, miss. Hopefully you won’t be as shocked the next time you meet a ghost,” he said in an insulted tone before floating away.

“Oh God. I offended him,” she said miserably after she had calmed down.

“Don’t worry. He always gets offended,” Eloise said sympathetically. “He’s very sensitive.”

“So, what do you think of Hogwarts?” Pavarti asked. Many leaned in to hear the answer. This was a test question in its own way.

“It’s...well it’s amazing. I just can’t believe all this stuff. I mean it’s still all sinking in. I wish I went here though, I can tell you that much. It’s beautiful. It’s so exciting. And think, all my friends back home have no idea that this world even exists while I’m here at your dance. It’s wonderful.”

Everyone smiled brightly. She had passed their test.

Finally, dinner ended and the band began to set up, apparently another favorite of the WWN: the Wicked Witches of the West. Hermione and Harry smiled at the allusion to the Muggle movie.

The music started and Eloise led Harry onto the dance floor. At first, Harry was a bit nervous, but took Kota’s advice, surveying the dancers around him. As he became more comfortable, he began twirling Eloise much to her delight. They were both laughing joyfully. Soon everyone was either observing or imitating their carefree antics.

Harry was surprised at how much more fun he was having without the pressure of the spotlight.

The slow dances weren't uncomfortable for Harry, as they had been the previous year. They talked during those. Harry explained the plot of The Wizard of Oz and they mused over how "cute" (Eloise's words) Hermione and Ron looked together. They peeked over at them during one slow song to find Hermione's head resting on Ron's shoulder and Ron's head laying on hers. They both wore blissful smiles that were contagious to the two who were spying on them.

Dennis Creevy was allowed to come to the dance as a photographer despite being a second year. The dance was for fourth years and above so the young boy was extremely excited about the opportunity. Harry made sure to ask that the boy take pictures of Ron and Hermione, which he was sure they'd appreciate.

"Doesn't Roger look absolutely gorgeous tonight?" Eloise whispered dreamily.

"Oh yes, Eloise, you know I think he's just absolutely gorgeous," he said sarcastically. "I still don't believe he still went with Cho after she turned him down."

"Well his beauty makes up for his lack of common sense."

Harry rolled his eyes making Eloise laugh.

As the next slow song started, Harry felt a tap on his shoulder. He turned around to find himself facing Ginny Weasley who was smiling shyly at him. She looked stunning and Harry felt a hitch in his breath when he first saw her. Her date was standing next to her, a boy that Harry recognized but had never met.

"Hi Eloise," Ginny said with a smile. "We were wondering if we could cut in."

"Sure," Eloise said, eyeing Ginny's date. From the looks of it, Eloise definitely approved of the younger Ravenclaw.

Ginny's date held his hand out to Eloise, who took it with a soft giggle, and led her away. Ginny blushed slightly as Harry took her hand in his and wrapped his arm around her waste, placing his other hand on the small of her back. She placed her hand right under the back of his neck and smiled brightly at him. He smiled right back.

"How are you liking the dance so far?" Harry asked softly as to not disturb the other dancing couples.

"Oh it's great! You seem like you're having a good time. Every time I look over at you and Eloise, you seem to be laughing and...spinning," she said before mentally kicking herself for revealing that she'd been looking at him. Harry didn't seem to notice her blunder.

"Yeah, it's really fun. We've gotten a big kick out of your beloved brother. Thank Merlin he asked Hermione to the dance, they're so happy together!"

They looked over at the pair, who were both smiling fondly and looking very comfortable in each other's arms.

"Fred and Angelina are the same way," she said, nodding at the two Quidditch players. Harry saw George nearby dancing with Kota, though more like Harry had with Eloise rather than Ron with Hermione. George saw them and nodded, looking at the pair somewhat curiously. Harry and Ginny just nodded back, smiling.

"I can't believe your friend likes George! It's just so funny."

"Oh yeah. She says his freckles are cute. Each time I see her she asks about him."

"Well Dad was sure thrilled when he heard about it. Sent George a list of questions to ask her," she said with a smirk.

"Well, he can always ask me or 'Mione anything. We grew up with Muggles after all. Plus, I live with a Muggle teenager and have one as a friend so I know what they do in school and everything."

“Oh trust me, he’s wanted to, but Mum’s always lecturing him that you’re not his subjects to analyze.”

“Well, tell them it’s fine with me. It’s actually fun. I feel really smart when I’m really just explaining my everyday life,” he said with a chuckle.

There was a slight pause where Harry had an internal struggle before his bolder side won, telling him that with his limited time left, he may as well be brave and speak his mind.

“You look really nice tonight,” he said with a lopsided grin. Ginny just looked into his eyes smiling with a faint blush on her cheeks. His words had filled her with more pure joy than he would ever know.

“You do too,” she said. They just smiled at each other for a few moments before Ginny moved forward slightly and rested her head on his shoulder. Harry was momentarily taken aback, but soon relaxed and rested his cheek against the side of her head with a smile.

He didn’t know it, but the three Weasley boys all saw this and caught each other’s eyes, grinning broadly. They all knew that Ginny’s crush on Harry had never truly died, though she tried to hide it. None of them missed the look of pure bliss on her face as she danced with him. They also knew that she couldn’t have picked a guy they approved of more. Fred grabbed Dennis and pointed at Harry and Ginny.

“Make sure to get quite a few of that one,” he instructed with a grin. Dennis happily obeyed.

At the end of the song, Eloise and Ginny’s date made their way back over. Ginny and Harry grinned broadly at each other before the two couples said goodbye to each other, Ginny following her date to the snack table.

After a few more fast songs, filled with much spinning and laughing, Harry went to get drinks.

He filled two Cups and turned around to find himself face-to-face with Cho Chang.

“Hello Harry. Oh thank you,” she said taking one of the drinks out of his hand and sipping it.

“Hi Cho,” he responded unenthusiastically.

“Harry, we must dance the next slow song together.”

“Thanks, Cho, but I came here with Eloise.”

“I saw you dance with that other girl! Speaking of which, you two were dancing awfully close,” she said accusingly. “You’d do best not to get involved with someone like that. Her family’s practically destitute.”

Harry scowled at her. “In case you haven’t noticed, I’m best friends with Ron Weasley and his family is like my family, so I suggest you don’t talk about them like that ever again,” he practically growled.

“So you think of that girl in a sisterly fashion, right? That’s a relief. You had me scared for a second there,” she said with a giggle, placing a hand on his shoulder, which Harry immediately shrugged away.

Harry was disgusted with her behavior and kicked himself for ever liking her in the first place. He was about to firmly tell her no when an idea struck. He looked at Eloise and decided he’d sacrifice himself for a good deed.

“Well, Cho, I would dance with you, but I couldn’t leave Eloise without a dancing partner on a slow song. Hmm....” He pretended to think about it for a second. “Oh, I’ve got it. Do you think your date could dance with her? That way they would both have someone to dance with.”

“Ask Roger to dance with her?” she asked slightly horrified as if she would be asking Roger to drink undiluted bubotuber puss.

“Yeah, you’re right. It’s too much trouble. Oh well, maybe next time.”
He shrugged and turned as if to leave.

“Trouble? No trouble at all! I’ll go tell him.” She hurried off toward Roger.

Harry ran up to Eloise.

“You’re going to love me,” he told her.

“The only way I’d love you is if you got Roger Davies to dance with me,” she said.

“As I said, you’re going to love me,” he said proudly.

Eloise was stunned, not daring to believe it.

“What?”

“At the next slow dance, Roger’s going to dance with you.”

There was a long pause.

“What? How? Why? Me? Huh?”

“Roger. Is. Dancing. With. You. Next.”

“Oh. My. God,” she said in shock. As the situation sunk in she began to slightly panic. “Wait! What am I going to say? If I open my mouth, it might come out ‘Hi, you don’t know me but I’ve picked out the names of our future children!’”

Harry laughed. “Don’t worry. You’re a great girl; he’ll love you!”

“But why is he doing this? You didn’t tell anyone...” she started in horror.

“No, of course not. I sacrificed myself to Medusa and said that someone would need to fill my shoes on the next slow song.”

“Harry. I love you. You are a god,” she gushed.

“That’s what they tell me.” He laughed. The song ended and was replaced by a slow one. Cho and Roger were walking their way through the crowd.

“Don’t worry; just have fun,” Harry whispered before Cho dragged him away.

Once a decent distance away from Roger and Eloise, Cho wrapped her arms around Harry’s neck and pulled her body right up against his, resting her head on his shoulder. Harry was slightly miffed with this unprecedented closeness with a girl, especially one he was beginning to dislike more by the minute, and froze for a second before Cho roughly took his arms and threw them around her waist.

Harry saw Hermione and Ron dancing the same way, but they looked comfortable and content whereas Harry was beginning to wish he had brought his invisibility cloak for escaping purposes. He felt something tickling at the back of his head and was about to swat the source away, but realized it was Cho’s hand playing with his hair. She began humming along to the music into his ear. Harry felt his face burn red.

He sneaked a glance over at Eloise and stifled a laugh. Her face was frozen in an expression of awe gazing up into Roger’s face. Roger was talking quietly to her and she nodded enthusiastically. No matter his discomfort at his present situation, it was all worth it for the look on Eloise’s face.

“Harry?” Cho whispered in his ear.

“Yeah?”

“You don’t fancy Eloise do you?”

“No offense, but I don’t think that’s any of your business,” he said. He didn’t fancy Eloise but he didn’t want to give Cho that satisfaction.

“Because you must realize you can do a lot better.” The “like me” was clearly implied. “You don’t need to do any acts of charity around here. I mean she’s so ugly and you’re so...” She trailed off batting her eyelashes.

“Well, I guess we disagree then,” he said coldly.

Cho could tell she was losing Harry. “Can we go outside for a few minutes? It’s so hot in here I’m not feeling so well.” She did her best to look slightly sick.

Harry sighed and allowed himself to be dragged outside.

Cho led him out to a balcony. Harry had to admit that the cold air did feel nice. He breathed in deeply.

“Feeling better?” he asked after a minute. Instead of answering him, she scooted closer to him. Harry scooted away. She continued moving closer and Harry slid along the railing away from her until he backed right into the corner. Cho trapped him there.

“I really like you, Harry.”

“No you don’t. You don’t even know me.”

“I do know you! You’re a wonderful seeker and the school champion. You’re famous and gorgeous and a hero,” she said smiling.

“Cho, you don’t know anything about me that’s important. You only know what they print in the Daily Prophet or what you hear around school,” he insisted, wishing that she would back away.

“Those things are important! Listen, we’d make such a great couple! Everyone would be jealous of us,” she said provocatively, walking her fingers up his chest. He brushed off her hand feeling sickened.

“Thanks but no thanks.” He was about to leave when she lunged at him, snaked a hand around to the back of his head and pressed her lips against his. After recovering from the initial shock, he grabbed

her shoulders and pushed her off of him, quickly escaping from his trapped position. He moved toward the door.

"I mean it, Cho, the answer is no. I'm not going to date someone who just wants to get into the Daily Prophet." He firmly walked back through the doors, ignoring Cho screaming for him to stop. He headed toward the Great Hall. Cho raced after him and grabbed his arm.

"Harry, think about this. You've had a crush on me for a long time. Most guys would die to go out with me. I mean, you can't just say no to me!" she insisted. Harry jerked his arm away.

"I believe I just did." He walked back into the Great Hall. The slow song had just finished. He quickly spotted Eloise who was still talking to Roger. Cho stormed past Harry, grabbed Roger and dragged him away angrily. Eloise spotted Harry and ran up to him with the widest smile ever. She ran up and gave him a bone-crushing hug.

"Thank you thank you thank you thank you..."

Harry laughed, pushing Cho out of his mind. Eloise led him back to the dance floor.

"How'd it go?" he asked, spinning her.

"It was absolutely amazing. He's so gorgeous up close. He was so sweet. He asked me what my name was and what house I was in. I, of course, promptly forgot. I think I told him I was Elwine from Huffleclaw, but I don't think he noticed. He asked if I was having a good time. I even connected my brain with my tongue long enough to ask him if he was having a good time!" she said enthusiastically.

"I'm so proud," Harry laughed.

"He said he's having an okay time, but that Cho's being a miserable date and is ignoring him. Then, when the song was over, we had a few more blissful moments of conversation before Medusa came and stole him away. I think she might have growled at me. You want to know the best part though?"

“What?”

“He said that he enjoyed dancing with me and that he’d hopefully see me around,” she said dreamily, dramatically pretending to be swept off her feet, half collapsing into Harry’s arms. He laughed and stood her back on her feet.

At one point, Harry ran into Parvati and gave her the dance he had promised, while Eloise danced with Seamus. Lavender asked him to dance for the next slow song, and Eloise danced with Dean. Some other girls were eyeing him closely, so Harry and Eloise slunk away from them to avoid any of their requests for a dance. That was, of course, aside from two, whom Eloise begged him to dance with for the chance to dance with their dates. She obviously didn’t mind the wide variety of dance partners, but she claimed none of them came close to the god-like Roger Davies.

He also spent a friendly dance with Kota, talking about their nights. Apparently a few Slytherin seventh-years had tried to sneak up on her and hex her, but George spotted them and signaled some Gryffindors around him. They dumped their glasses of punch all over their dress robes and put dancing spells on their legs, so they were forced into doing very difficult dance moves. They had supposedly done some very impressive leaps and spins, along with a lovely tap-dancing number.

“Don’t you love magic,” Harry said wistfully.

When the dance was over, and he was back to dancing with Eloise, she informed him that George had interrogated her about what her exact relationship to Harry was. Harry was slightly confused at George’s reasoning, but guessed he had just been curious.

As it neared midnight, the band announced their final song: “Somewhere Over the Rainbow.” Some Muggle-borns who had seen the movie sang along, including Kota, the forever movie-buff.

The band finally finished with a bow and the whole student body, along with the professors, gave an enthusiastic round of applause

before filing out. Eloise and Harry ran to the snack table with a few other people to shove the remains of the free sweets into their pockets. They were among the last to leave, laughing about their fun time. Suddenly, Eloise paused and smiled.

“Harry, look!” she whispered, pointing out to the balcony. Harry’s gaze followed her finger to find Hermione and Ron talking, standing very close together. They had only watched a few seconds when Hermione and Ron stopped talking. They paused momentarily, looking intently into each other’s eyes before leaning in and kissing lightly.

“Awww,” Eloise sighed, putting both of her hands over her heart.

“Let’s go,” Harry whispered. “I think they want their privacy.”

Eloise wiggled her eyebrows suggestively.

“Not like that, perve!” he laughed quietly, dragging Eloise away.

“Aw come on, I want to see!” she pleaded.

“It’s not a spectator sport!” Harry scolded.

They sat down on some steps and talked for a while until they were both exhausted and parted their ways. Harry stumbled his way to the Gryffindor tower, somehow making it up to the dorm. He didn’t bother to change into his pajamas, opting to sleep in his boxers rather than put in the effort of changing. He barely registered Ron marching in joyfully a little while later, looking anything but tired, before he fell into a deep sleep.

* * * * *

A/N: Hope that tickled everyone’s fancy! LoL. Anyways, bad news is that my next chapter won’t be up as quickly as these last few were. I’ll probably post it next week, but I’m still working on it and it’s coming surely, but slowly. Hopefully this one will sustain you all ‘til then!

Oh and one funny excerpt from my life: Today I got out of class early and my friend was waiting in her car, so I snuck up and banged on her window and she screamed. I was laughing at her and walking around to get in the passenger seat while she was glaring at me, when I tripped over the cement barrier thing for the parking space! She was then the one laughing at me. I thought it was rather hilarious myself. It's Karma in the works!! LOL.

* * * * *

Dadaiiro: Babysit for fun? That's the wrongest thing I've ever heard. Except I do babysit these 2 kids who I do adore, but for any other circumstance, that's just scary. My siblings and I have IQ teasing all the time, so I couldn't resist putting it in. Little kids are rude, they just don't really know it. Or maybe they do and don't care. Wouldn't that be so random to find out your friend was famous? I always wonder if someone I know or sit next to in school writes fanfiction. Wouldn't that be insane? You could sit right next to your favorite author and never know it! Maybe I just think too much into this stuff. I can't believe it was one of my favorite chapters! A lot of people didn't like it! Thank you, I'm so glad you liked it. Hope you liked this one!!

Terence: Oh brilliant? Really? *rubs fingernails on shirt* oh yeah. LoL My counselor's breathing down my neck as well! I think that's their real job. Not to help you, but to scare you into submission. I was bitten by a demon child too! When I was trying to get him to stop beating up his sister! The kid was like a small Dudley. As for what to write about, how fun! Okay, what genre of story do you like to write? Ooh, when you tell me, I'll make up a list of ideas. Well, for now, I hope you enjoyed the chapter!!

LillyandJamesAAf: Thank you so much for putting me on your favorites list! It really means a lot to me! I'm glad to update as long as people keep reading! Wouldn't you love to be that Muggle in Diagon Alley? Except then I might be jealous, but oh well, it would be so fun anyways!! LoL nothing extremely exciting in this chapter. You are right, there are so much more good H/H stories than H/G, which is why I'm planning on writing an H/G one the way I think it should be, lol. Yes, I'm definitely insane in my own way, though rather far off from a killing spree, I'd say. Though Harry may beg to differ since I

torture him so much and may or may not end up killing him. We'll see!

Temporary Insanity: I know, no excitement in the last chapter, or many chapters in this story really. But hey, I have to have the dull ones to make the exciting ones seem that much more exciting! My siblings and I always have these type of fun fights that Kota and Harry have where we make fun of each other. I love the Weasleys! Harry autographs for everyone!! Well, for me and you, that way, they'll be more special! Shh...don't tell anyone. Lol Holy water. Brilliant! I'll definitely try it next time, though I fear the kid might melt. Hope you liked the chapter!!

Trapper's Girl: Crazy stupid fun is where it's at! Love all the music you listed! You should keep Trapper's Girl as your pen name. I like it! I have a Golden Retriever who is so bloody stupid, but I love him to death nonetheless.

Thundering Lights: Lol thank Merlin the squirrel was alright! I am such a complainer I know, especially about "the scene". Now that I'm writing it though, it's turning out alright, but there's one little idea that's popped into my head about it, but I'm not sure if all you readers would just throw bricks at my head if I go with it. *le sigh* I'll be having long drawn out debates over it with my sister who will end up just telling me to do what I want to do, which doesn't really help since I don't know what I want to do. There I go again. Well anyhow, hope you liked the chappy!

Luinlothana: I'm so happy you liked the last chapter! As you may have noticed, Malfoy hasn't made any major appearance lately. He hasn't done anything drastic which you can interpret however you'd like. Oh well, you'll see what I have planned for everyone in due time. Thank you so much for putting me on your favorites. It means a lot.

Doneril: I'm glad you like it, but unfortunately, I can't tell you whether Harry will die or not. I hope you'll read on anyways! What am I doing to Snape? Hmm... that could be answered on so many levels, but what exactly do you mean? Do you not like his character in this story? Oh well. Lol.

Myr Halcyon: I forgive you! I absolutely adore reviews, but knowing that you're reading my fic is enough for me. (I must admit I'm a bad reviewer myself.) I'm glad you like the characterization in my fic, since that's a rather big part of what I'm trying to get across through the story. Harry is so sweet, isn't he? I love Snape too! In book 5, when it was going through his memories when he was little, with his parents fighting, I wanted to hug him so much! I hope you continue to enjoy my story, and if you ever have the time, just leave me a short review to let me know you're still with me if it's not too much trouble!

Eowyn of Ithilien: I love the phrase "spawn of satan." It's such good fun! I like the yarn in the hair idea. I would have loved to see you in the scary orange dress robe, though you might be scared if you knew how I picture them. Tacky isn't nearly a strong enough word. LOL. HAHA Sara: evil, sugar-high, possessed child. I love it! Maybe my grandma is really a genius with her panty hose in the garden as some miracle fertilizer. I just think she's insane, but you never really know! Hope you liked the chapter!

LizhowHP: Thank you so much for putting me on your favorites list! Makes me feel all warm and fuzzy inside. I'll put some extra pain in for Harry later, just for you. I sound like a Mafia lord, how cool is that! Harry's such a sweetie and I'll definitely stand by that!! Hope you liked the chapter, though it lacked the pain. All in good time, all in good time.

Maximum Poofy-Queen of AU: took down your story randomly? How horrible!! I don't know what I'd do!! Oh wait, yes I do, I'd bawl my eyes out and chuck my computer out a window. Too bad you're not an evil computer genius and send an evil virus or something. Actually, that would suck for everyone so never mind. Alas, the pain of stupid computer breakdowns are always horrible. I'm glad I could make you smile. I know, I'm noticing a serious lack of good stuff on . Maybe I'm not looking hard enough, but I do know that most of my favorite authors have stopped writing. :(. Anyways, I hope you liked this chappy and I hope you got everything sorted out with the evil !!

Xirleb70: Holy crap, your cousin sounds like a demon!! Voldemort in the making!! Is his name Tom Riddle by any chance? LOL. I love the dog collar idea. It's hilarious!! Hope you liked the chapter!

Fantagal: LOL you know I can't tell you. Glad you liked the little girl, many thought she was a little freaky lol. Harry's a major cutie, I totally agree.

Mockingbirdflyaway: I'm so sorry about your losses. My grandparents both died of lung cancer, the lady I babysit for (who I'm really close to) is in remission from breast cancer and 2 years ago my good friend had spinal cancer. They thought he'd never walk again and would die, but he showed them all and now he's in remission, running around and being weird as usual. Harry has Leukemia, as I will get a little more into later on. He does have the same cancer as Mr. Stenson. Even though it affects Harry differently (because of his magic) if chemotherapy didn't help with Mr. Stenson's cancer, it will definitely not work for Harry. Besides, many types of Leukemia can rarely be cured. I'd love to read your story and will do so as soon as I can. Right now I'm swamped with homework, but I'll try reading it this weekend, kay? Hope you liked the chappy.

Arctic Wolf2: Thank you so much for putting me on your favorites and for reviewing each chapter to let me know that you're still reading!! I hope you liked this chapter!!

Joe: Why thank you! I'm glad you liked the playful teasing between Kota and Harry. That kind of joking is practically my life. Lol sad I know. Yeah, babysitting can be a scary thing. Hope you liked the chapter!!

PussyKat: Thank you! The Weasleys really should know, but they're also the main people that Harry doesn't want to know, since he doesn't want to be treated differently. It will be a long while until they find out. Hope you liked the chapter!

Kind of detached: LOL um, well you see, if Harry dies, I will have to give him a proper funeral, but if that happens, I will give you the location of his grave and you can dig him up, deal?

Lilly_cat: Yay! I made you cry! It sounds weird, but I love hearing that people get into my story enough to cry! Thank you for your review! I hope you liked the chapter!

Star*Dust: Lol well feel free to flame and criticize to your heart's content. Constructive criticism is awesome since it helps me become a better writer. Though so far, I think you've been a very nice, fabulous reviewer! Hope you liked the chapter!!

Two2Feet: Yeah, I don't hero-worship celebrities either, but there are those who do, and I don't think J.K. really ever touches upon that. I'm

always surprised that doesn't get any crazed teenage girl fanmail or anything, just because there are crazy teenage girl star-fanatics everywhere. (I know so many myself lol) You're right, the dialogue was a bit stilted and boring lol. Oops? I just wanted to touch upon Harry's fame, since he never seems to get approached in public though he's so famous, which I think is sort of strange now that his picture's been posted all over newspapers and magazines and he has such defining features. I'll try to fit in a scene with Sirius's visits for you, since I think you're right. They should be emphasized a little more. Phew, long review response, but anyways, I hope you liked this chapter!

Kdalemama: Harry has Leukemia, which I will emphasize a little later on for you vigilant readers!

Molly Morrison: Lol, here is your chapter mademoiselle! I love the eagerness! Lol, you are close, but one chapter off on your assumption. Hope you liked the chappy!

Caiaphas: Don't worry, I promise not to leave it unfinished!! YAY!! I'm so happy I had you in tears! I was crying when I wrote Ron's chapter! LOL. Thank you so much! What's a Cannon Snape? J.K. impressed with moi? Such a compliment I've never known! Thank you so much for your wonderful praise! I feel like I just got a letter to Hogwarts! I think Snape would be slightly terrified if he won Witch Weekly's most charming smile award. I'm laughing just thinking about it. Thank you so much! I hope you continue to enjoy this story!! I'm really happy now. YAY! Hope you liked the chapter!

Rain Warrior: Thank you for always reviewing my chapters to let me know you're still here! Yes, last chapter was short, but I've had shorter chapters. (Chapter 10 was my shortest I think) Anyways, it had to be short because I couldn't cut it off anywhere else! Please forgive me! Take the length of this chapter as compensation. *Lays it at your feet* Lol. Hope you liked the chappy!

Ckat44: I know, but sometimes I feel the need to put in some less exciting chapters to develop character and to emphasize exciting parts, you know? Maybe not. Lol. Anywho, hope you liked this

chapter better! I promise you there will be exciting things in this story, along with some of the slower chapters.

Titanic-HarryPotter-lvr-2: Thank you! I will keep writing, I promise that! Hope you liked the chapter!

Blue Phoenix2: Yay, I made you cry! I'm so glad you like this story. Only time will tell Harry's fate. Dun dun dun.... lol

H.5: Thank you, but I'm sure your stories are good as well! Don't beat yourself up!

Abarraine: Thanks for the smiley!!

Woah dang, check that out! I responded to every reviewer. LOL... it took me 3 hours to do so, but it was fun. Word is giving me major problems today though, so if some of the review responses are messed up, I'm very sorry, but they're there! Probably should have been studying for my chemistry exam tomorrow....oops? LOL oh well!! See you all next week if not sooner!

Author's Note: Wow, look! It's possibly my longest chapter ever! This, as you all know from all my annoying whining, has been a very hard chapter to write. I just didn't know if I could really get their reactions right since they all must be feeling something so complex, sorrow for Harry, anger for his lies, but a secret feeling of, oh I don't know, contentment (?) that it was someone they've only known for a few months rather than their father/husband (ironic since Harry gave up his life for them after only a few months, but he's never really known family, so he thought of theirs as his.) Am I confusing you yet? I hope I am so you might understand why I had a hard time writing this. Sigh. I hope it came out okay. This chapter is dedicated to TheEverFalling for her absolutely beautiful picture that she drew and painted for me to celebrate 400 reviews. (400 Reviews!! Can you believe it?!?!?! WOO HOO!!!) Well, here it is. After all the sweat and gum and chocolate mints and getting in the "sad scene mood" by listening to sad songs, it's finally here, for better or worse, til death do us part (a possibility for Harry muahahaha) and all that jazz.

It was late Sunday morning. George was giving Kota a more extensive tour of the school than Harry had given her on her last visit to the castle. Harry and Ron got some cold pumpkin juice from the kitchens and took it out to the lake. Hermione had said that she needed to talk with Ginny, who was grinning and looking very anxious. It was no mystery they'd be talking about the dance.

The two boys sat at the edge of the deeper part of the lake. They took off their socks and shoes, rolled their pants to their knees and dangled their feet in the water. The weather was growing warmer as summer approached.

Everyone was in high spirits, temporarily forgetting their anxiety about O.W.L.s. Lately, there had been a sense of foreboding in the air for Harry and his friends. June was approaching all too quickly and it had been taking its toll on Harry. He was fatigued much more often, and would have groups of days where he ceased to have an appetite. His friends were worried, but did their best not to mention it too much.

This morning, Harry wasn't feeling too great. He knew that the pumpkin juice would probably be the only thing to enter his stomach that day. On the way out to the lake, Harry had had another dizzy spell and with a stumble, had spilled half his pumpkin juice. Ron grabbed his elbow to steady him, waiting until Harry's vision returned to normal. This had been happening so often, though, that no words were spoken about it. He chose not to mention to Ron that he also felt weak and overly hot. The cool water felt nice, and he pressed the glass with the cold juice to his forehead, hoping he wasn't developing a fever.

Despite all that, he was in high spirits. Ron couldn't stop grinning and therefore, neither could Harry.

"So, Ron, have fun at the dance?" he casually asked sipping some pumpkin juice and relishing how it seemed to cool the burning in his throat. Ron's smile, if possible, widened.

"Oh yeah. I had such a good time. Hermione...I mean...just wow!"

Harry laughed. "And how about after the dance?" he asked. Ron blushed.

"You'll never guess what happened out on the balcony."

"What?" Harry asked pretending that he didn't know.

"Ha! I thought you'd try that! You should know 'what' mate, since I saw you and Eloise slinking away last night after seeing me and 'Mione there."

Harry blushed with amused guilt and then shook his head with a lopsided grin. "If you had told me first year that you and Hermione would end up snogging on a balcony, I would have committed you to St. Mungo's mental ward." Ron blushed furiously and laughed.

"Same here."

"So, what happened after I left?" he asked wiggling his eyebrows suggestively in the same fashion Eloise had the night before.

“Harry!” Ron admonished. “We just talked for a long while. Then we walked back to the Gryffindor tower together and I er...kissed her goodnight.”

Harry let out a whistle and Ron smacked him upside the head telling him to “shut it,” though at the same time smiling because Harry approved.

“I think I’m going to ask her to be my girlfriend.” He sneaked a glance at Harry, silently asking for his opinion.

“I think it’s a brilliant idea,” Harry said seriously.

“Really?”

“Definitely, you both obviously fancy each other. You’d make a great couple.”

Ron smiled genuinely. “So, how was your time?” he asked, changing the subject. Harry told him about his night, including the Cho incident.

“Jeez, maybe you shouldn’t have said no to her, it looks like it’s tuned her into a crazed lunatic obsessing over you. I guess you’re the first guy to reject her. Maybe she takes it as a challenge, or a turn-on,” he added. They both laughed.

Eventually, Harry had to go to the library to work on a Defense Against the Dark Arts project. Each student was assigned a different topic, and he therefore didn’t feel the need to wait until the last second with Ron. He had vowed to himself to start it today and wanted to get it over with early so he could be done in time to spend some time with Kota after she was done with her tour.

He grabbed a bunch of books that looked promising and brought them to a back table. Not too long into his research, Hermione came up and joined him at the table.

“Hey Harry.”

“Hey ‘Mione,” he said with a smile.

“So what did you and Ron talk about?” she asked casually.

“Probably the same thing you and Ginny talked about.” He paused to watch her blush. “So you really fancy Ron, huh?”

“You know, I really do. How on Earth did that happen?” she asked smiling fondly. Harry put down his quill and propped his head up with a hand, his elbow resting on the open book he had been looking through.

“It’s been happening for a long time. I think it just took you two a little longer to figure it out.”

“Are you saying that you knew this was going to happen before?”

“‘Mione, I’ve known since about third year. Of course, it really became obvious at last year’s ball.”

“The Yule Ball?” she whispered aghast. “What are you on about? We had a huge row that night! He was making fun of my date and he made it clear he didn’t think of me even as a girl!”

“Of course he thought of you as a girl. He just had to make it seem like he didn’t so you wouldn’t think he’d been thinking about you like a girl.” Both of their faces twisted into confusion. “Erm...okay that didn’t make much sense. He just didn’t want you to know he liked you and so he waited until the last minute when it could be a casual thing to ask you. It was a wonder that you couldn’t tell how disappointed he was. And making fun of Krum, come on Hermione, you can’t seriously not know what that was about.”

She shook her head.

“He was jealous! He didn’t like Krum because he thought you liked him.”

Hermione sat back in a thoughtful daze. "I think I'm just realizing that I'm going to be very perplexed about the way you males think for a very long time; you're so confusing!"

"Trust me, 'Mione, we're not all that confusing. Now girls are a different story. You want a great mystery in life, become a guy and try to figure out girls."

Hermione laughed quietly, cautious of the librarian. "I think I'll stay a girl thank you very much."

"Wise decision."

"So, er...do you think that Ron, er..." Hermione stammered. It was the first time in his life that he'd heard Hermione become tongue-tied. He smiled comfortingly.

"He fancies you too."

Hermione smiled brightly, looking significantly relieved.

"You know what, Harry?"

"What?"

"You're the best friend I've ever had. I mean that. In my whole, entire life."

Harry blushed. Hermione smiled at seeing her friend's embarrassment, too modest for his own good. Instead of making him respond, she walked over, gave him a hug and kissed him on the forehead before leaving.

"Merlin, I'm going to miss those two," he mused sadly, turning back to his research. His shifting of elbows had flipped the book to a random page. He was about to turn back to the page he needed when something caught his eye.

The Daewarro Curse

The Daewarro Curse is an ancient and widely forgotten curse, yet perhaps more dangerous than any today. This curse doesn't kill swiftly as does the infamous Avada Kedavra Curse, but does it all the same. When the Avada Kedavra Curse is cast, the life of the victim is extinguished and destroyed. Life itself is an energy. Magic is also an energy. When an individual has enough life energy they live, when they have enough magic energy, they become a witch or wizard. The Daewarro Curse doesn't obliterate this energy as Avada Kedavra does, but instead transfers all types of energy, life and magical to the caster of the spell. The more powerful the energy that is taken, the more power that is given to the caster. This makes the caster more powerful, unless some weak entity is attached to the life force, such as a weak magical energy (as in Muggles and Squibs), mental illness, or terminal illness, but since this spell is most often cast on Wizards, this last one isn't usually a considered factor. The Daewarro Curse has many sub-related curses which are more complex and will transfer specific aspects of life, such as the aforementioned terminal illness, but these are far more complicated...

Harry skimmed the rest of the article thoughtfully before making a copy of it. Instead of working on his project, Harry went over this new information in his head. This curse was like the one he had used but much simpler to transfer a whole life force rather than just cancer. If somehow Voldemort cast this spell on Harry under the impression that it would make him more powerful, the cancer would also get transferred over and be attached to Voldemort's life energy, thus killing him. He racked his brain trying to remember something that seemed important.

'Oh yeah, that weird spell to make cancer worse!' he remembered suddenly. What if he cast that right before Voldemort cast the Daewarro curse? Then Voldemort would be killed almost immediately.

He was beginning to get excited about this idea. Then, he wouldn't have to die in vain. Of course, this would be near impossible to pull off. First, he'd have to get into a battle with Voldemort, and a fifteen year old boy asking to fight a dark lord would be slightly suspicious,

not to mention dangerous for anyone around. Of course, Harry had been suspecting since the first attack on Hogwarts that Voldemort would try again. Second, the spell seemed to have been forgotten and the chances that Voldemort would just happen to use it were slim.

Nevertheless, he spent the next hour tracking down the spell to increase the cancer. What was it? It was a simple one with two words. Recnac Moon-something? Or was it Recnac Something-moon? He flipped through pages, scanning the titles quickly. Finally he saw it. Recnac Sunimoon, that was it. He copied the page down and wrote a few notes about his thoughts with it. He looked down at the last thing he'd written.

"How to get Voldemort to use it?"

He tapped his quill on the paper. He checked the clock. He had completely missed dinner, but wasn't hungry at all. It was now getting late and he'd be getting ushered out of the library in the next fifteen minutes.

'Think, Harry,' he scolded himself. 'All right, if I was Voldemort, then I'd be the ugliest git in the entire world. No, think. Okay, if I was Voldemort, what do I want? I want to kill me (Harry) and Dumbledore and basically everyone else, but especially me. So, how do I do that? Well, I either attack Hogwarts, which I've already tried, or wait until summer, but by now he, er, I mean I, must know that I can't touch the house. So it's at Hogwarts then, since I (Harry) sure won't be falling for any more Portkeys that lead me away from Hogwarts. So, it's either this year, or I'd have to wait until next year, which I don't want to do since I'm a greedy git who wants power NOW. So, I'd plan for a second attack on Hogwarts. Last time, the information got out so this time, I'd be really secretive about it, even more so than last time, but the attack would be much grander.'

He tapped his quill again. He wasn't sure where this was leading him, but decided to go on with it anyways, since it was more progress than he'd been making.

‘So, I’d only trust a few people. My most loyal Death Eaters, if any at all. But I might take information from any of them, I guess. I’d just check it out a lot first.’

Harry smiled, he was on to it.

‘So, if one of my Death Eaters came to me saying he found a spell that would not only get rid of, well me (Harry) and transfer my worst enemy’s magical energy over to me, in theory, making me more powerful, I’d definitely check into it.’

So all he needed was a Death Eater to suggest the spell. If Voldemort even looked into it, Harry knew he’d be enticed, if not for the extra power, then for the revenge. He now understood how useful spies could be.

Under “How to get Voldemort to use it?” he drew an arrow and wrote “Snape.” The trouble would be getting this crazy plan to actually work.

Suddenly, his vision went white again, and all sound was blurred into a distant humming. His head spun and ached. Harry grasped the edges of the table and looked down, trying to focus on objects. The whiteness formed little squares, like a chess board with white squares intermixed with squares of vision. Finally all the white faded away until he could see once again, but the sense of vertigo pounded in his head.

He decided it might be best to go lay down for a bit.

He got up and walked out of the library toward his dorm, crashing straight into Neville.

While Harry had been in the library, there had been a conversation going on in the Gryffindor dormitories between Kota and Neville.

“Yeah, he stays over at our house a lot during vacations. Well ever since we moved in of course. I was so shocked when we found out he was a wizard. I’m still having a hard time believing it, but how more real can it get?” Kota said happily, sitting on the comfortable sofa.

"It's just as weird for me. I can't believe you're here. You know, a Muggle at Hogwarts. I've never met a Muggle before," Neville said excitedly.

"Really? That's crazy. Have you ever seen a movie?"

"No. What's a movie?" Neville asked curiously.

"Ask Harry sometime. I make him watch them all the time at my house," Kota said fondly.

"He must go over to your house a lot."

"Yeah, he does. He's practically family."

"Well he must really like you guys to do what he did," Neville said with a sad smile.

"You mean with my dad's cancer? I thought he'd be in big trouble if people found out. That's why he told us not to mention it in front of any wizards," Kota said, slightly worried. He didn't want Harry to have gotten into trouble.

"Well, he tried to hide it for a while but after he collapsed in the hall, our school nurse found out and told the headmaster. They're not going to punish him for it or anything, what would be the point?" he sighed.

"What do you mean he collapsed? What do you mean about the school nurse finding it out? I'm confused," she said, now getting extremely worried.

"The cancer," he said confusedly. Surely the girl knew that Harry would eventually start showing physical signs of the illness. "The effects are starting to show."

"Wait, how does Harry have cancer?"

Neville looked at her incredulously. "Because he transferred it from your dad to himself! Where else would he have gotten it?"

"What? He did what?" she asked with fearful eyes.

Suddenly, Neville gasped, remembering Harry in the Hospital Wing saying that he hadn't told the Stensons. Neville had been in such a state of shock that he hadn't registered Harry's words, remembering them for the first time now. He looked up at Kota with fear in his own eyes.

"Oh crap."

Kota's breaths were coming short and quick. "No. Oh my God. No. He didn't."

"Please, just forget what I just said," Neville begged, knowing it would be impossible. His eyes began filling with tears at his betrayal of Harry's wishes.

At that moment, George came back into the common room to find Dakota.

"Hey Kota, I got some pumpkin juice. You've got to try some," he said, approaching from behind the couch. When he saw the expressions of Kota and Neville, he immediately grew worried. "What's going on? Are you guys okay?"

"Did you know about this too?" Kota asked shakily.

"Know what?" George asked, putting a hand on her shoulder.

"No, Kota, please. Harry would kill me. He did even want you to know. I screwed up. Please, don't. Just let me...let me get Harry," Neville pleaded desperately.

"Know what? Is Harry okay?" George asked, concerned for the boy he thought of as a brother.

"Where's Hedwig? I need to send a message to my parents," she said quietly, eyes slightly unfocussed.

"No, please don't. Just let me get Harry before you do anything," Neville begged her.

"George, please," she said standing up, turning her back on Neville to face George. "I need to use Hedwig now."

George looked from Kota to Neville. The sad look in her eyes caused George to give Neville a sympathetic look. "I'll bring you to the owlery." Kota nodded and walked out of the common room, George running to catch up with her. Neville ran out after them, yelling at Kota to stop.

When she didn't, Neville ran to find Harry, nearly crashing into him as he was returning from the library.

"Harry, Merlin, I'm so sorry! I've been looking everywhere for you. I'm so sorry, Harry, I don't know why but I thought she knew! I forgot that she didn't until it was too late! I'm so sorry!" Neville immediately start ranting, looking very close to tears.

"Neville, what are you talking about. Who didn't know what?"

"Kota," Neville moaned, "your neighbor. I thought she knew!"

Harry's blood went cold. "Oh no. What did she say? What did she do?"

"She's going to the owlery to find Hedwig. She's going to owl her parents. Harry, I'm so sorry!"

Harry ran past Neville and toward the owlery, ignoring the dizziness lurking in the back of his head.

He raced into the owlery to see Hedwig flying out the window with a note attached to her leg. He wanted to run to the window and call her back, but knew it would be pointless. His secrets were out and there was no turning back.

Kota looked up, her eyes red and puffy from trying to repress her tears.

Harry stood there looking helplessly at his neighbor.

"Kota, I..." he started, but his voice died out when he couldn't think of what to say.

George shot both of them sympathetic looks, even though he didn't know what was going on. "I'll leave you two alone," he said quietly, walking toward the door. He patted Harry's shoulder and then walked out.

"Is it true?" Kota asked in a much higher voice than usual.

He wanted to deny it but knew it would be futile. It was fine with him to omit certain facts from people, but he couldn't bring himself to outright lie to someone he cared for about something so serious. Besides, as Ron always said, he was terrible at lying.

Harry sighed and met her desperate gaze with guilty eyes.

"It was the only way. I searched everywhere but there isn't any magic that can destroy cancer, only one spell that can transfer it. And before you ask, I can't transfer it again or anything," he explained somberly. This wasn't what he had wanted to happen.

"Oh God," she said in a whisper, sinking to the ground. Harry tentatively walked over and sat down next to her on the straw-covered floor. "But why?" she moaned in despair.

Harry's eyes dropped to the ground, focusing on a random piece of straw.

"Because your family saved me. You treated me like a part of your family, more than I ever knew with my own. I couldn't just let your dad die when I could do something about it. He means so much to your family and without him...I don't know... it would all fall apart."

The tears began to fall freely from Dakota's eyes, her body shaking with sobs.

"I thought this was all over," she cried. "God, Harry, I want to hit you and thank you at the same time. Why did you lie to us? Why didn't you tell us? When were you planning on us finding out? After you died?"

Harry's heart sank, both with guilt and with Kota's words. It always made it seem more real when people acknowledged that he would die out loud.

"I just wanted you all to be happy. I didn't want you to treat me differently. I didn't want to see you cry and know it was because of me."

She looked at him through his tears and began pounding her fists against his chest, but not with enough conviction to make it hurt.

"You...you...you..." She couldn't seem to figure out what to say. She wrapped her arms around his neck and began weeping hysterically into his shoulder. He wrapped his arms around her back.

"Shh...don't cry. Shh...it's okay," he whispered calmly. Her sobs died down until her crying ceased all together.

"My parents should be here soon to pick me up. I already told them in the letter. My dad's going to be furious," she said quietly, still sniffing. Harry's face paled and he nodded. He stood and pulled Dakota to her feet. The two began to make their way to Dumbledore's office where the Stensons would be Portkeying to shortly.

When they got to the gargyle, Kota quietly said the password (Fizzing Whizbees) and they made their way up the stairs, a feeling of dread growing with each step Harry took.

When they got to the door to Dumbledore's office, he could already hear frantic screaming inside. Harry couldn't bring himself to knock, so Kota did. The shouting stopped.

When Dumbledore opened the door to let them in, his eyes shone down on Harry with sympathy. Harry gave him a pained smile in return and stepped into his office behind Kota.

He was immediately pulled into a very tight hug as Mrs. Stenson pressed kisses into his hair, her tears dripping onto him. "Stupid, stupid boy. I can't believe you did this. So stupid," she said, hugging him even tighter.

"I'll give you some privacy," Dumbledore said quietly as he stepped out the door.

She finally let go and scooped her daughter up into her arms, leaving Harry to face Mr. Stenson, who's eyes were slightly wild. He looked livid.

"What did you do, Harry? Why did you do this?" he boomed, causing Harry to cringe slightly.

"I'm sorry."

"You're sorry? Sorry won't give you back your life, Harry! I...how could you do this? You're just a child! You had your whole life ahead of you and you threw it away! Why? Why did you give it up for me? You hardly know me!" Mr. Stenson bellowed, throwing his hands into the air.

The words stung Harry. He had felt like part of their family and Mr. Stenson was saying that they hardly knew each other. He hung his head and muttered another apology, trying not to cry.

"How do you think this makes me feel, Harry?" he yelled, advancing on Harry. "I'm going to have to live with this guilt for the rest of my life. I'm going to feel like a murderer!"

"You're not! It was my decision!" Harry insisted pleadingly.

"Dear Lord, you're fifteen years old! I can't understand what compelled you to give up your life for me. I've already had forty-

seven years to live. And you didn't even tell me what you were doing! Why would you trade your life for mine?!" he bellowed. Harry just hung his head.

"Well?"

Harry said nothing.

Mr. Stenson grabbed his arm roughly and shook him. "Answer me, damn it!"

Harry tensed and flung his free arm up to protect his face out of pure instinct as a result of living with his uncle's violent rages for so long. He obviously thought he was going to be hit.

Mr. Stenson's face immediately softened. As he broke down and cried, Harry cautiously lowered his arm. The older man pulled him into a tight embrace. Harry felt the man's body tremble with sobs.

For all the happiness Harry had meant to bring, he was getting far too familiar with people crying over him.

"Harry, oh God, I would never hurt you. What did you do? What did you do?" he sobbed.

Harry felt tears welling up in his own eyes, his throat burning with trying to keep them in. But he couldn't cry. He couldn't bear for them to see him cry.

"I couldn't let you die when I could stop it," Harry explained quietly.

"But you gave up your life," Mr. Stenson insisted through his tears.

"There are more people depending on your life than mine. You have a family that couldn't live without you. They love you," Harry explained in a near whisper that cracked with a twinge of jealousy.

Mr. Stenson put his hands on Harry's shoulders and held him out at arm's length, looking into his eyes with a look of slight horror.

“Harry, just because you were cursed with a horrible family doesn't mean that nobody cares. We care. We've always cared. God, those awful relatives of yours should burn in hell for what they've done to you.”

Suddenly, Harry's vision went white again, and the sound began to buzz.

‘Oh Merlin, not now. Not now!’ he silently pleaded, but there was nothing he could do but wait for it to go away. Maybe they wouldn't notice.

He tried to look natural, hanging his head so they wouldn't see his eyes, but doing so made him feel even dizzy. He felt Mr. Stenson lift his chin to make Harry look at him, as they often did when speaking about the Dursleys. Harry wished he didn't as he knew had only a vague sense of which way was up.

Despite his efforts to appear normal, Harry stumbled back, grabbing onto Mr. Stenson's arm (which was still on his shoulder) to steady himself.

“Harry?” he heard Mr. Stenson asking frantically. He still couldn't see the man in front of him, but at least he could hear him.

“I'm fine, just give me a sec,” he said quietly as the white began to fade.

When the white was completely gone, Harry looked up guiltily at the two female Stensons. They looked horrified. He then turned his gaze to Mr. Stenson's eyes, apology written all over his face. Mr. Stenson was shaking his head in shock.

“I'm okay. I was just a little dizzy. I...er...I think I might have a cold or something. Nothing serious,” he insisted, hoping he sounded truthful, but the Stensons saw right through the lie.

Mr. Stenson hugged Harry to his chest. “God, not like this. Anything but this,” he whispered. “Is there any way you can transfer it back?” he asked, breaking his hold on Harry to wipe away his tears.

“Or to someone else?” Kota piped up, looking desperate. As much as she grumbled about his strict rules on dating and such, Kota needed her father. That much had always been apparent to Harry and continued to be clearly written in the girl’s eyes.

Harry shook his head sadly. With a dazed look on her face, Kota walked over and wrapped her arms around Harry.

“When are you going to tell me that you’ll find a way to fix this,” she whispered, shutting her eyes tightly.

“It’s better this way,” he whispered back. “I would have been killed by that dark wizard I was telling you about anyways. I realized some time ago that I was really just born to die. There’s no way around it. This way, though, it will actually mean something,” he said, trying to convince himself as much as her.

“It isn’t fair.”

“Life isn’t fair a lot of the time, but it all works out for the best in the end. Everything happens for a reason right? That’s what you always say.”

“I was wrong.”

“You’re never wrong, remember? You’re the Queen of Rightness, are you not?” he asked with a smile, remembering their many teasing arguments that had ended with Kota’s declaration of being just that.

Kota couldn’t help it. She laughed. It was a teary, heart-wrenched, hopeless laugh, but a laugh nonetheless, reminding them both of a lighter time.

“Harry, dear, how about you come home with us?” Mrs. Stenson asked gently.

“No one knows what you’re going through better than I do. It might help to have someone to talk to and to be there who understands,” Mr. Stenson added.

"Yeah, Harry. You're part of the family. Come home," said Kota with a sad smile.

Harry sighed.

"Thank you, but I think I need to stay. My friends are here and my godfather can finally take me in when school's out, and we haven't had a lot of time together. I couldn't bear to leave the wizarding world right now, and Hogwarts was my first real home. I just couldn't leave it right now," he said, looking over at Fawkes, who was eyeing him knowingly.

"Don't worry, Harry. We understand. But you always have the key to our door if you ever need it," Mr. Stenson said sorrowfully.

Dumbledore chose that moment to re-enter his office, looking somberly at the people in front of him.

"I have the Portkey. Are you ready?" he asked, addressing the Stensons. Mr. Stenson nodded. Kota burst into tears.

"Harry, what if...what if this is the last time I see you?" she asked.

"I'll still write, Kota. I'm sure we'll see each other again. I'll invite you to my godfather's this summer and you can see how Quidditch is played. Maybe I'll teach you how to fly. It's not really goodbye. Don't think of it as goodbye."

Kota nodded. "Okay." She paused. "I'll see you soon, Harry," she said as she hugged him, nobody truly believing the words. They were comforting nonetheless.

"See you soon."

The Stensons each embraced him one last time. The only words were a whispered "thank you" by Mrs. Stenson. They each put a finger on the goblet Dumbledore had brought and disappeared.

“Goodbye,” Harry whispered, gazing at the spot they had just been standing in. He thanked Dumbledore and then left the office himself.

* * * * *

A/N: *Collapses on couch and fans herself* Wait, I have a better idea.
Collapses on couch and has buff, topless man-candy fan her Ah,
that's better. Thanks to SiriusWolf for the Mr. Stenson's "anything but
this" line! Great and much-needed idea! Harry's dizzy spells are
based on ones I get myself when I stand up quickly. I can usually
hear fine though, but everything goes white and I have to hold onto
something. They're bloody annoying, but I've been getting them for
years and so has my friend, so I think it's fairly normal. Well the clock
has struck midnight and my buff man-candy fanner guys are turning
back into mice. Damn. Well, no use staying awake now. Goodnight
everybody. Will post and respond to reviews
tomorrow....ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ.

* * * * *

Eowyn of Ithilien: Mmm...I love dancing! I'm not really into the rap either, but at least at prom, they kept a great mix of song types. I sung at the top of my lungs to each one. Of course, I've never met a boy as mature as the ones in my fic. I think it makes them even more immature in comparison. I want to make Harry real and go out with him! I want to take Harry to prom!! Mr. Weasley's a fun man. (Just between you and me, he wanted to know the purpose of glow sticks and pencil sharpeners. As a matter of fact, I don't really understand the purpose of glow sticks myself.) Oh cool! School plays! I used to be in drama and I luuuurved it! I was in a few community plays. Once, I played a leader of a crime syndicate with big eyebrows! Children....yum...very nutritious! YaY! Cho is oatmeal! Guess what? She's only going to get worse! Muahahaha! You could make a dress out of post its if you walked very carefully!

Dadaiiro: Wow, that's so amazing how you moved in right next to that author! How lucky are you! Yeah, I have a friend who is so crazily similar to me! We both read fanfiction, but haven't told anyone but each other (and I've told my sister but that's not the point.) She reads it for something different, not HP, but it's still pretty cool. Actually,

she knows I write, but doesn't know I've posted any fanfiction. I like having that little secret. We're both extremely sarcastic as well. Yeah, Harry's becoming one sizzling hottie, but he's too innocent to realize it of course!! Did I say she was a Ravenclaw? Oops...Just pretend I said Hufflepuff. I have friends who have picked out all their kids names and all the other details of their futures. It's kind of scary, but fun at the same time. George? Jealous? Nah. He was checking to make sure Harry was free for Ginny! Though it's a bit of a bonus that Kota's free as well! Mr. Weasley would love it if George started dating a Muggle! I love 'Somewhere over the Rainbow' too! The movie scares me, but I love the song. I'm glad you thought it was all romantic! (I'm a closet romantic, peaking out from behind the door. But shhh...don't tell anyone.) Well, hope you enjoyed the chappy! Til next time!

Terence: Hey hyper person! I just emailed you five seconds ago, but you're so cool, you get a review response too! I have a bloody cold and I've been sneezing all day. In the middle of class, suddenly, liquid will just start dripping out of my nose. More than you needed to know I'm sure, but I thought I'd express the misery felt by my raw and aching nose. I hope you can think of a good story to write!! That would be so wonderful! I have not tried that many Altoids. I am slightly scared of altoids. They are curiously strong. They would probably clear out my sinuses though....hmm.... Anywho, I'm so honored that I'm your permanent favorite story! School—my English teacher thinks I'm stupid! He always calls on me when I don't know the answer and he thinks I'm incompetent. I wish I could tell him that at least my readers on seem to think I'm okay at English, so there! It's my lowest grade! That's never happened with English before! Alright, let me stop my ranting. Hope you liked the chapter! Talk to you soon!

Maximum Poofy-Pissed Off Queen: People are stupid. If you don't think a fic is "appropriate", don't read it! Don't report it! That's just cruel and stupid and mean! *Finishes rant with a growl at stupid people* I hope it'll all work out. I'm partial to Cho-bashing myself (It'll become more apparent as the fic goes on!!) Anywho, I hope you liked the chapter! Feel better! I'll send you one of my buff fanner guys to you as a gift! He has dark hair and green eyes. Call him Harry. He won't mind.

Shamera: Wow! Thank you for the wonderful review! It really made my day! Ron's reaction is one of my personal favorite parts. I cried when I wrote it! It would be horrible if Harry lost his magic! Kota's knowledge of Harry's cancer was solved in this chapter, I hope it was decent sense it was sooo hard to write! Don't worry, I've already finished it, I'm currently just vamping it up. I typically post once a week. I love long reviews! I'm really honored to receive a review from you! Thank you so much! I hope you continue to like my story!!

BratPrincess-187: I know, I'm smooth like butter! Don't worry about not reviewing! I'm glad you're back to reading it now! I'm glad you appreciate the Cho bashing. There is much more to come. Hope this chapter had enough drama to satisfy your drama craving!!

SiriusWolf: Wow, you've done some honorable reviewing in the last few days! Thank you for each one! Let me try to address all of them. Ahem. I'm having some more sciency stuff coming up, never fear. I'm asking a boy to Senior Prom as well! Of course, he's a Junior, so not much choice there, but the idea's there. I'm glad I seem to have set your wheels of thought churning. I love hearing your ideas! Thank you for the Mr. Stenson line. It fit beautifully. So you seem to think that Harry's going to die. Interesting. You may be right, you may be wrong. People seem to be of very mixed views on this debate. Only time will tell I guess. A Mary-Sue is an invented girl character who is beautiful, has everyone in love with her, and is sickeningly perfect. She usually is friends with everyone and fixes house rivalries and crap. A little hero that's really annoying. I hope nobody feels Kota falls into this category since I've tried hard to keep that from happening. I'm sorry you find my fic boring at parts. I think all the pure character development chapters are pretty much over, so hopefully you'll find it more exciting from now on, but tell me if it's getting boring again so I can try to spice it up. Hopefully you won't mind the review responses now, since you're in them and can just read yours and then x out. Phew. So, I hope you liked the chapter! I love your reviews! Keep those ideas rolling!

LilynJamesAAF: YAY!! I made you not mind H/G. My evil plot to convert you has begun! Muahahah! Don't worry, I'm just joking, I would never dream of converting you. *cough cough* LOL. OMG, if I

ever saw a hot boy with dark hair and really green eyes, I think I would jump them. I now must write my H/G fic to rope you in!! lol. Well, I hope you liked the chapter!!

A.247: Lol, I'm not sure if that was a compliment, but I'll take it as one since I like compliments. J/K. Don't worry, lovey dovey is no more for this fic. I just couldn't resist that one scene!!

Romm: *hands over tissues* yay! I love making people cry. Ok, that sounds weird, but it's true. Hope you continue to like it!!

Theauthorthatwrites: Ahh! I'm honestly trying with all my might to finish up this fic, but new things just keep coming up and school and sickness and ahhhh!! I'm trying though! Lol Unfortunately, the H/G thing won't go much further in this story, but I am planning on writing an H/G story that actually has a plot after this one. I've already written the beginning and end, I just have to write the middle. It will be much shorter than this one though methinks! But it'll have to wait until this one's done! Never apologize for a long review!! I love long reviews! I relish them! Well, anywho, I hope you liked the chapter!!

Death's Shadow: The Stensons are it for now, you'll have to see for the rest. You'll have to wait and see what happens with old Moldie Voldie lol!

Thundering Lights: Ooh, thanks for putting me on your favs!!! That's so nice!! Good point. If you kill me off, you'll never know if Harry lives or dies or what! Best keep me alive. You like my wonderful fall? I'm smooth like butter! I love the Weasleys! I want to be a Weasley!! I definitely noticed Ron pushing for Harry and Ginny, I just wonder how he'd react if they actually decided to date. Hmmm... I love Harry's naivety. It makes him adorable. I think J.K.'s Harry is going to grow into the Harry we all love, he's just going through some stuff right now. Kota/George probably won't go much further in this fic, since the Stensons are kind of making their exit right now. Unless Harry lives and then you never know, but he also might die, and then that kind of kills the romance factor. What will happen? I know I know!!! Kota stayed in the Gryff. girls dorm as Dumbledore arranged in an earlier chapter. I guess you've figured that out by now though. Whhoooo anywho, read and review be doo be doo be doo.

Meinien: Thank you! Marathon readings are fun, although they distract me from homework that I really should do. Voldie voldie, don't worry, he'll come up, just be patient young one, or old one. I really don't know. hahaha.

Catiechan: Good thing you reminded me! I almost forgot! Okay, I'm setting my "new scene wheels of the mind" in motion. Hope you liked the chappy!!

PussyKat: You dreamed about my fic? That's so awesome! That's the best compliment ever! Don't worry, I won't stop posting this. I think about HP fics all day long, sadly enough: my own and the ones I read. The Dursleys' punishment was Snape putting permanent donkey ears and tails on them. Harry requested that they didn't do anything more since he didn't want to deal with a trial and stuff. Don't worry, there will be some sick Harry scenes in the not so distant future! Hope you enjoyed the chapter!

Saz: Wow, you're having a baby?! Congratulations! That's so wonderful! I hope everything goes smoothly.

LizhowHP: Thank you! I wish boys were actually like those in this fic. Sigh. My imagination makes real boys seem so much more immature in comparison. Wow! I love the enthusiasm for this chapter! You just made my day! La dee da! *skips off into the sunset* Oh, Harry pain will come, never you worry. He will suffer!! (Scary voice from the Ring.) muahahaha!

Two2feet: You're right, Harry should have danced with Hermione! Damn. I should have thought of that. Oh well, we'll just say that they were looking so blissful dancing with each other, that Harry didn't want to interrupt. Hopefully this chapter answered some of your questions!! Hope you liked it!!

Also thanks to blackenedsoul (soon my dear, soon), jouve25 (wow! I'm glad you like it! I hope you continue to read!!), Rain Warrior, Leigh, Joe, GrimmyD, Xirleb70, rhinemjr, Fantagal, o Hell o Kitty o, STAR*DUST, ckat44, and Arctic Wolf2. You guys rock my world!! Ahhh!! I have to post this quick and then start my homework and

studying. Umm....oops? LoL. So much for school being my number one priority.

Author's Note: Hello all! Right now I'm singing along to my Moulin Rouge soundtrack (Favorite movie and CD) and pretending that I have a gorgeous man like Christian (Ewan McGregor) singing to me. What a beautiful voice! Of course, if I was pretending that I'm Satine (Nicole Kidman), then I would be pretending to be a prostitute, but oh well. It is also taking a great deal of imagination to pretend I can sing. LoL. Does anyone else see the HP similarity in the characters. Christian looks like an older Harry, Satine looks like Ginny, and the duke could be Draco!! Then again, maybe it's just me. I'm way too obsessed with HP. I think everyone reminds me of the characters. But especially Moulin Rouge. I'm obsessed with that movie too. Hey, if anyone owns the soundtrack or sees the movie, "Come What May" could be Harry and Ginny singing in this fic! I will love you 'til my dying day. Oh yeah, they haven't gotten together (nor will they in this fic) and we're not sure if Harry will die or not. Well, we can pretend anyways. This chapter's dedicated to Terence for telling her English class to read my fic!! How cool is that?!?!?! Righty-o, enough of my babbling, on with the chapter!

* * * * *

When Harry got back to the Gryffindor common room, he quickly said the password to the Fat Lady, who told him he was looking a bit peaky before opening up.

"You need to start eating more, dear!" the painting shouted before closing behind Harry. Harry was slammed into by an orange blur.

"Ron?" he asked confusedly as Ron hugged him. His redheaded friend then stepped back with a huge grin and began jumping from foot to foot excitedly. Harry couldn't help but smile with him. "Ron, what's going on?"

"She said yes! She said yes!" he practically shouted.

"Who said..." Harry paused and his eyes widened. "Wait, you mean Hermione? You asked her?"

Ron nodded enthusiastically. "Yes!! She's going to be my girlfriend. Or she is my girlfriend, assuming it officially started when she said yes! Hermione's my girlfriend!"

Harry laughed with joy, thoughts of the Stensons being immediately shoved out of his head.

At that moment, Hermione came down the stairs, pausing for a moment as she saw Ron, her face lighting up and a blush creeping onto her cheeks. Ron immediately calmed down as his eyes fell upon her. He was still grinning broadly as he ran through his hair and fell victim to the famous Weasley blush.

"Hey, 'Mione," he said shyly.

Hermione rolled her eyes at their awkwardness and came up to them, standing by Ron's side. She gave him a quick peck on the cheek and grasped his hand, causing Ron to both smile and blush even more.

"So I'm sure Ron's told you we're dating now," Hermione said happily before her expression turned slightly worried. "Are you all right with it, Harry? Really, is it okay?"

"Are you kidding? It's about bloody time!" Harry said with a laugh.

Hermione lunged forward and wrapped her arms around his neck. Harry hugged her back. "Oh, Harry, you're the best. Are you sure you're fine with this?"

"Of course. I'm so happy for you guys!" he said, making Hermione hug him harder.

They both looked over at Ron, and smiled.

"Oh come here Ron," Hermione laughed. Harry and Hermione opened up their hug and pulled in Ron too.

"Oh how cute, a group hug," Harry said with light sarcasm. His comment just made his two friends squeeze him harder.

Finally they all broke away when Harry dramatically claimed that they were crushing his lungs.

“Hermione! Is it true?” Ginny screamed gleefully as she raced into the common room from the girls’ tower. “Are you seriously going out with my prat of a brother?”

Hermione nodded and Ginny hugged her. “You realize you’re insane,” she commented. She stepped back to look at the two, standing beside Harry.

“Oh no. I’ve just realized that poor Ginny and I are going to have to witness your snogging sessions,” Harry said shaking his head. Hermione’s jaw dropped as the pair both turned bright red.

“Harry!” she admonished.

“Oh Merlin, you’re right Harry. This will definitely be psychologically damaging,” Ginny said in mock resignation.

Harry sighed dramatically. “Well, you know what we’ll have to do then, Gin.”

“Yup.”

“You do?”

“Er...well no.”

“We’ll just have to tease them mercilessly about it. Follow them around making kissing sounds and such,” Harry said, ignoring the glares he was getting from Ron and Hermione.

“You wouldn’t,” Ron said crossing his arms.

“It’s for our own mental health,” Harry said clapping Ron on the back.

“Yeah, Ron, you wouldn’t want your best friend and your favorite sister to suffer psychological damage, would you?” Ginny asked innocently.

"Yeah, that would be a real shame," Ron said sarcastically. "I think you two are already psychologically damaged."

Harry put a hand over his heart and put on an offended expression. "That hurts deep inside, Ron."

"Harry and I are going to have to go and cry now," Ginny said, sniffing and pretending to wipe away tears.

"Yeah, you know, the kitchens are a great place to go and cry, I hear," Harry said to Ginny, suddenly in the mood for food.

"Of course. The house elves will comfort us."

The pair walked toward the portrait hole, pretending to be comforting each other from tears as Ron sniggered behind them and Hermione rolled her eyes with amusement.

"Oh by the way, have fun snogging!" Harry called over his shoulder as they darted out.

"Harry!" his two friends scolded.

"Let's go get some food. I think the house elves can make banana splits," Ginny said cheerfully.

"Ooh, you're on," said Harry.

The two happily went to the kitchens and ate ice cream to their heart's content.

The next morning Ron woke up to find the dorm empty except for Harry who was still sleeping. He had noticed that Harry had come in late the night before, having spent a lot of time in the library and then pouring over his notes. He swore his former accomplice in procrastination was now turning into Hermione.

He decided to let Harry be woken by the sounds of Ron getting ready instead of braving the battle of ripping him out of bed. However, by

the time he was nearly ready, Harry had still refused to wake. Ron sighed and walked over.

“Oi mate. Time to get up!” he called pulling back the bed curtains to Harry’s bed, revealing his sleeping form.

“Go away,” he mumbled into his pillow.

“I don’t think so. You’re going to be late!” Ron insisted.

“Mmmm...” Harry murmured unconcerned. He turned away from Ron as a statement of defiance to being forced from slumber. He was sleeping in his boxers because of the hot weather. In turning, the sheet slipped down, exposing his bare back to Ron.

Ron furrowed his eyebrows and looked closer at his friend’s back.

“Bloody hell, Harry, what are all these?” he asked, horrified.

“All what?” Harry mumbled sleepily, not picking up on Ron’s concerned tone.

“All these scars!” he whispered, shocked.

Harry’s eyes shot open. It didn’t take him long to realize what was going on. He immediately flipped over onto his back, strategically placing his arm over the stab wound scar on his stomach.

“Oh, those are nothing,” he stated. As the words escaped his lips he mentally kicked himself for not coming up with a proper excuse. He racked his brain for a justification for having so many wounds on his back.

“Harry, what happened?”

“Nothing, I...er...fell off my bike,” he stammered.

“You don’t have a bike, and I know that your cousin wouldn’t let you ride his.” He studied his friend’s guilty face. “Harry, did somebody do that to you?” he asked, aghast.

"Of course not! I— I was just being stupid and I fell into a glass table during the last holiday."

"You would have told me."

"I didn't want you to think I was an idiot," Harry persisted.

"I don't believe you, Harry. I know you too well."

"Well, believe what you'd like, I'm telling you the truth," Harry said red-faced, mentally berating himself for his carelessness.

"Fine, I'm not going to fight you about this. But, for the record, I don't believe your story, I think somebody did this to you and you're just too proud to tell. If you ever want to tell me about it though, I'm here, okay? But I don't like the fact that you're keeping secrets from me, especially since the last one ended up being so serious." He got up and began to leave.

"Please don't tell Hermione." The desperate plea unwillingly escaped. Ron turned back with a pained expression, full of concern. He cast a silencing spell on the room so nobody outside could overhear them. He bit his lip and walked back over to Harry. He scrutinized Harry's face for a few minutes, causing his friend to begin to squirm uncomfortably under his gaze.

"The Dursleys did this to you didn't they?" he asked with a gasp of comprehension without releasing his gaze. Harry's eyes slightly widened. He blinked in surprise.

"What? Of course not!" Ron didn't miss the slight waver in his voice and the expression on Harry's face told him the truth.

"You're uncle hurt you!" he said in disbelief.

"It was an accident!" Harry insisted desperately.

"Does anyone know about this?"

Harry bit his lip nervously. Finally he resolved that Ron had been a greater friend than Harry had ever hoped for and deserved to know at least part of the truth. He looked away and swallowed hard.

“Yeah.”

“Who? Anyone who’s going to help?” he asked softly sitting on the edge of Harry’s bed.

“Dumbledore knows.”

“Does he...er...hurt you a lot?”

“No, it was just an accident. It was just one time. He didn’t mean to do it or anything...”

“He didn’t mean to shove you through a glass table?” Ron asked disbelieving, trying to show Harry that his story wasn’t making sense. A look of realization dawned over Ron. “The Stensons know, don’t they? That’s why they were trying to hide you from your uncle at the train station.” He gasped and turned to Harry. “Was this why you were sick on the way back to school? Merlin, it was! That’s why you woke so suddenly when we grabbed your shoulder, we were hurting you!!” Ron was beginning to look really upset. Harry was shaking his head no, but he could tell Ron didn’t believe him and couldn’t get enough control of his emotions to say the lie out loud.

“We’re going to be late for class, I ought to get ready,” he murmured trying to slip away, but Ron wouldn’t allow it.

“No way, Harry. This is way more important and we have plenty of time. Harry, you need to tell me the truth. I’m your best friend. You can tell me anything.”

“There’s nothing to tell! What happened to not prying?”

“I abandoned that plan. I always thought your uncle was a total bastard, I just never thought...” he trailed off.

“Ron, don’t think. You’re jumping to conclusions.”

“Well I’m jumping to the right conclusions. I can see it in your face. You’re a hideous liar, Harry. I can see it just by looking at you. Dumbledore’s not letting you go back there right?”

“I don’t think so,” Harry muttered.

“Harry, how long has this been going on? That cut and bruise on your face on the train ride after Christmas holiday,” he recalled, “that wasn’t from a scuffle with your cousin was it?”

Harry opened his mouth to deny it, but Ron cut him off.

“And you were staying with the Stensons a lot last summer. Was that because they knew?” He didn’t let Harry answer. “Merlin, that’s why your handwriting was so bad in your posts over the summer! It was all shaky and weird.”

Ron finally stopped ranting and looked over at Harry, who was looking away, his face red with shame. Ron immediately felt sympathetic.

“You’re not going to tell anyone are you?” Harry asked in a quiet voice.

“Of course not, as long as Dumbledore knows.”

“Not even Hermione or your family?” he asked pleadingly.

Ron nodded. “All right. I promise I won’t breathe a word to anyone.” He paused. “I’m sorry Harry, I didn’t know. If I had, I would have invited you round more often and...”

“Please, Ron,” Harry interrupted, annoyed, “I know. I just don’t want to talk about it okay?”

Ron nodded solemnly.

“Ever,” he added as a warning for Ron not to bring it up.

“Harry, you’ll need to talk about it eventually.”

“No I won’t.”

“Yes you will. You can’t keep this all bottled up inside or you’ll explode!”

“Why does everyone keep saying that?” Harry snapped. “Since when is the world an expert on what I need to do! Maybe I don’t want to talk about it!” He stood up and roughly threw on a nearby shirt.

“It’s not good for you to shut everyone out, Harry. There are tons of people who care enough about you to want to help. You can’t keep something like this all to yourself.”

“Oh so I should go out and start pouring out my soul to everyone?” Harry yelled. Ron was thankful he had put up the silencing charm. “I don’t need pity, especially from those who could never understand.”

Ron stood up. “Then make me understand!” he yelled back, not really angry, just frustrated with Harry’s stubbornness and the whole situation in general.

“That’s impossible, you could never understand! I can’t go around saying ‘Oh pity me, my uncle beat me while my cousin and aunt encouraged him,’” Harry spat in a mocking voice. “‘Oh, I grew up in a Cupboard and was taught that I was WORTHLESS from the day my parents died. Oh pity me please!’” His voice changed back to a screaming tone. “I’m supposed to protect the whole damn wizarding world and I can’t even stand up to my own Muggle relatives! Everyone’s counting on me!”

“No they’re not! You’re imagining that. Honestly, nobody cares about this!” He screamed. He realized that it had come out wrong too late.

“Exactly! Nobody wants to hear my sob story. Nobody cared when I said I didn’t like the Dursleys. Dumbledore’s ignored my requests to stay at Hogwarts for the summer for FOUR YEARS! He didn’t want me as his burden! Nobody does! Nobody cares about me as long as

I can save the school and defeat the bad guy to protect everyone else.”

“You’re not anyone’s burden!” Ron insisted, still yelling if for nothing else than just keeping up with Harry’s tone.

“Yeah RIGHT!” Harry raved. “I can’t live with Sirius because I’d be in the way. I can’t stay at Hogwarts because nobody wants to deal with me. I BEGGED Dumbledore to let me stay here when the school was attacked and he even TOLD me he had to get rid of me because I’d get in the way. So while you and the rest of the school got to spend a few days in a palace, I got to get the CRAP beaten out of me by my uncle. And guess what, Ron, if Snape hadn’t found out earlier what had been going on, I’d be dead! If I’m not a burden, then why did my uncle stab me, Ron? Why did he try to kill me? Thank GOD I haven’t killed Voldemort yet, or nobody would have bothered to stop him from finishing me off!” he ranted deliriously. He kicked his nightstand furiously and then grabbed his foot in pain. Ron would have found it comical if the situation hadn’t been so dire. He couldn’t believe what had happened to him, but worse, he couldn’t believe that Harry thought that he was a burden.

“He stabbed you?” Ron asked in disbelief.

Harry shot him a glare as he nursed his foot. “Yeah he did, are you happy now?” he snarled. “Is this what you wanted, Ron? For me to “open up” and spill all my dirty little secrets to you? Well congratulations, now you can go soak in all your glory and...”

Ron cut him off by walking over and hugging Harry, shocking his friend into stopping his rant. Harry struggled to break away.

“Let go of me, Ron!” he yelled through angry tears, pushing at his friend, but failing in getting away. “I don’t need your pity!”

“Harry, listen to me, it doesn’t matter what all those blokes out there who think you’re some type of idol. To me, you’re just Harry, my best friend. I don’t expect you to do anything spectacular. I personally think you should get as far away as You-Know-Who as possible. Your uncle was a total moron. He obviously didn’t know what he was

missing out on. And you've never been worthless because you mean the world to Hermione and me. And you can scream, cry, and make as many mistakes as you want and I'll never think less of you, and I would never think less of you because of what some asshole did to you," he said soothingly, and suddenly, Harry wasn't struggling anymore. His angry screams melted into tears.

"I'm so sorry. I couldn't get away," he sobbed.

"Don't apologize, Harry. You didn't do anything wrong. It was the Dursleys who were wrong."

"But I should've..."

"Don't think about it, mate. You can't do anything differently now. It wasn't in your control. Just know in the future that you have friends who you can tell anything to, okay?"

Harry nodded and quickly wiped away his tears, stepping away from Ron who finally let him go. "Thanks."

Ron nodded sympathetically.

"Er, how's the foot?" he asked with a smile.

"I think I killed it," Harry laughed.

"Hospital Wing?"

"Nah," Harry said waving a hand nonchalantly. "I've had enough of that place. I'll just walk it off." He limped over to his nightstand and picked up all the things he had knocked off.

"Well, if you want breakfast, you'd better hurry and get dressed because classes start in fifteen minutes."

"That's okay, I'm not in the breakfast mood today, but you go on ahead and I'll meet you in..." he trailed off trying to remember their schedule for the day as he grabbed his school robes.

“Transfiguration,” Ron reminded him.

“Right. Transfiguration in fifteen minutes then,” Harry called rushing off to the showers.

Ron watched his friend disappear behind the door and sighed, turning to leave.

What didn't Harry have to go through?

After dinner, that day, and after insisting to Neville that he forgave him for telling Kota (“Trust me, Neville, it was really for the best. Don't worry about it, I swear I'm not mad.”), Harry slipped away, saying he had to do something or other. It hadn't been a difficult task as Ron and Hermione had been obviously itching to go somewhere for alone time, a.k.a. snog time. So while his two best friends slipped off to the astronomy tower, Harry went down to the dungeons to talk about his discovery with the only person who could make his plan work.

“Professor?” Harry asked cautiously, opening the dungeon door a crack.

“Potter?” Snape asked perplexed.

“I was wondering if I could have a word.” Harry saw Snape's expression flicker to a look of both sympathy and panic.

“Not about that,” he added, embarrassed.

“Come in and shut the door behind you,” he said relieved and taking on an indifferent tone.

Harry did that and approached the desk. He handed the copy of the passage about the Daewarro Curse over. Snape read over it and then looked up with an eyebrow raised.

“I think that Voldemort's going to try another attack on Hogwarts this year.”

“That’s a viable assumption. He has eluded to that, but hasn’t been specific about when.”

“Well, what if you suggested that spell to him?”

Snape looked at him as if he’d gone insane.

“And why, in the name of Merlin, would I do that, Mr. Potter?”

Harry sat down in the chair facing Snape’s desk and sighed, readying himself for the long version of the situation. “Well, when Madam Pomfrey says my cancer can’t be transferred again, she’s not entirely correct. It can be transferred to somebody else, but not without me dying, so it seems that there’s no point. From what I’ve gathered, cancer is a Muggle disease because our magic energy won’t let it into our bodies.”

“Then how do you have it?” Snape interrupted. Harry looked up. It felt strange having a conversation with the potions master as almost an equal, not as a student being reprimanded or a weak boy with glass embedded in his back. He couldn’t keep the eye contact, however. It felt too awkward. He looked down at the desk and continued his explanation.

“When I did the original spell, it forced the cancer to bond with my life energy to keep it in my body instead of going back to Mr. Stenson’s. In Muggles, the illness doesn’t actually bond with their life energy, it’s more of an outside thing that’s gotten inside, but separate from the life energy. There’s no magical energy to chase it away. The spell I did actually connects the cancer with my life energy so my magical energy can’t get rid of it. It’s sort of like trying to sink a cork in a glass of water. The water won’t let it stay under unless you glue the cork to the bottom, but then the cork’s stuck and you can’t get the cork out without destroying the whole glass. That’s why it can’t be transferred again; it would take my life energy with it, along with my magical energy since that’s connected with my life energy. That’s what this spell does. It takes the whole package and transfers it to someone else. Does that make any sense?”

"I'm not an ignorant student, Potter," Snape said indignantly. Harry refrained from rolling his eyes.

"I wasn't implying that. I wasn't questioning your ability to understand it; I was questioning my ability to explain it. You don't need to be so defensive," he said with slight exasperation. There was a long pause while Snape looked over article once again.

"Wouldn't the Dark Lord's magical energy fight away the cancer?" he asked coldly.

"According to that article it says it won't. What I think happens with that spell, if I'm correct, is that without my body, my life energy is practically dead. The other types of energies can only survive when attached to a living life energy. So my magical energy will attach itself to his life energy, creating a doubly powerful magical energy, but so will the cancer. My magic has already mutated a bit to adjust to having the cancer sort of connected to it, and will make it even easier for the cancer to attach to Voldemort's life energy."

"Why would you want to give the Dark Lord your powers and life? Just so that eventually, sometime after he's destroyed the wizarding world, he would die?"

Harry once again refrained from rolling his eyes. Snape must have thought he was really stupid.

"Well, I figure he's going to try to kill me anyway, but if he casts this spell on me, it would kill him, especially if I cast this one on myself first," he said, handing over the copy of Recnac Sunimoon. "Then it should kill him within minutes rather than months."

"But you'll die from this," Snape commented as if trying to inform Harry of it for the first time.

"Yes."

"That would be suicide," Snape said curtly. Harry sighed.

"It wouldn't matter much at this point, would it? Besides, he's going to have me killed. He might pull me into battle first. If he's determined to use this spell, he'll be defeated either way, whether I somehow win a duel with him, or if I lose in result of this curse. I guess it's an 'if I'm going down he's going down with me' type thing."

Snape contemplated this momentarily.

"So you want me to propose this to the Dark Lord?"

"Well, it's an idea. What do you think?"

He stared back down at the spell. "It just might work. But what stops him from performing it on a bunch of people before you just for power?"

Harry sat down in a chair facing Snape's desk.

"Hmm...maybe you could tell him about it at the last minute, but since he'll probably keep the attack really secretive, there's no way to tell when that is," Harry brainstormed.

"I could tell him that you can only perform it once," Snape threw out as an idea. Harry couldn't believe he and Snape were having an actual discussion. Snape almost seemed...normal.

"What if he looks into it though, he'd know you were lying."

"Well, if it's as rare as it seems, he may have difficulty proving that wrong. I could say it was a possibility, and if he couldn't prove that possibility wrong, he wouldn't want to take the chance of wasting it."

"Well, then, wouldn't he cast it on Dumbledore or at least someone that would give him more power?"

"From what I understand, you have become extremely powerful."

"That's just because I'm sick," Harry sighed.

“Well, the Dark Lord doesn’t have to know that. All we need is the rumor of your power to reach him.”

“Won’t it be suspicious if you give him all of this information all of a sudden?”

“Well, the rumor can be fed through other sources as well,” Snape said thoughtfully.

Harry gave him a quizzical look.

“Say in your next Potions class with the Slytherins, a potion explodes while I’m not here to contain it, so you demonstrate your ability to do powerful, wandless magic: an elaborate show of healing people, stopping fires, and so on. You’re good at drawing attention to yourself.”

Harry rolled his eyes. Snape ignored him and continued.

“So then, all the Death Eater children who have been instructed to keep their parents informed of any strange happenings, especially surrounding you, will mention the incident. Then several Death Eaters will support me on that claim making it less suspicious.”

Harry nodded. “That could definitely work.”

“Of course, it’s more probable than it has ever been that you could defeat the Dark Lord, without killing yourself I mean. Your dueling is extraordinary and if I helped with your training, it’s very possible this spell won’t even be used.”

“Better be careful professor. Wouldn’t want to make my already over-inflated ego get any bigger. My head might explode,” Harry joked, using the words he heard so often from Snape’s mouth.

Snape let out a laugh and then froze along with Harry. Harry’s jaw dropped as he stared at his professor, who had a horrified look on his face. They were both officially spooked and beginning to think they had temporarily lost their minds. There was no denying it though,

Snape had laughed, not sarcastically, for one of the few times in his life.

Harry gulped. "Did you just...."

"No."

"Yes you did, you just..."

"No, I didn't," Snape growled.

"Okay."

Harry felt it wasn't a good idea to argue with a man in control of house points and detentions, especially when Harry wasn't sure if he had just been hallucinating. Snape cleared his throat.

"So, about this spell. We need to plan this little potions accident."

The two discussed the details of their plan for a while, planning the "accident" that would happen the next day that Harry felt up to it. They worked out that the sign would be Harry turning in his paper with his initials written at the top rather than his full name like usual. Snape figured out a potion that was explosive when two of the ingredients were switched. It would cause strange side effects, but no real harm. He'd talk with Dumbledore to make sure he approved and to work out a few small details.

Snape had told him not to tell anyone of their plan, even his two best friends. If he let them in on the plan, it could easily be ruined if one of them made any comment about it in front of the wrong person or at the wrong time. Snape gave him the scenario of facing Voldemort when the Dark Lord was about to cast the curse, and having one of them shout out the truth in a vain attempt to save Harry's life, causing Voldemort to just Avada Kedavra him. Apparently, Snape had witnessed a similar situation once before. Harry reluctantly agreed to a vow of silence on the subject.

However, the plan was on.

A/N: I really hope this chapter cleared things up a bit, rather than making them more confusing. It's hard to tell. See, I know what I'm talking about, so it makes sense to me, but I don't know if I'm explaining it correctly. Here's what's happening. Take a sheet of white paper, then a small piece of red paper and a small piece of blue paper. The red is cancer the blue is magic energy and the white is Harry's life energy. Pretend that the blue is attached to the white but can move around. Pretend that each time you try to set the red piece of paper down on the white, the blue comes and blocks it, not letting it get in. What the spell that Harry did at x-mas did was take a glue stick and glue the red piece of paper to the white. Now the blue can't block it or take the red off of the white, because it's attached to there now. But it doesn't like the red and they're both stuck to the white so the blue kind of freaks out a little and mutates (Harry's increase in power) and turns purple! The cancer can't be transferred because it's stuck to the white and if you take the red, the white and the blue are coming along with it. So what the Daewarro Spell does is take the white paper, with the red and now purple stuck to it and gives it to someone else. This new person has to keep your white paper, but is more interested in the purple and glues the purple to their own piece of white paper, but in doing so, accidentally glues the red to themselves too. With the Recnac Sunimoon spell, the red gets bigger and wipes out the whites.

Erm, now that you all are super confused with bits of paper glued to your hands, try this. This spell will cause Harry to die!!! But he'll die anyways b/c of the cancer. This way, Voldie has his life and his magic and his cancer, but the plan is that the cancer will take over and kill Voldie too! You must all hate me now for addling your brains. If you're still confused, write so in your review. I give up for now.

Eowyn of Ithilien: You, me, and lizhowHP liked that part the best in the chapter. LoL. I'm glad you liked it! Happy it made you sad! (You're getting to know me by now with my strange liking for making my readers emotional.) Harry has a plan that kind of sucks for him. Oh well, we will see. "Blindly effective" eh? Not sure what it

means, but it sounds cool. I'll take it as a compliment!! Yay! Hope you liked the chappy!

Dadaiiro: Of course I've read book five! I have an obsession to feed! This is AU though, you must remember, meaning that it doesn't include all the book 5 goodness. Otherwise, much of it wouldn't make sense. I don't think the Stensons would really care a whole lot that Harry's death happens to save the wizarding world since they are so close to him. They, like his friends, care more about the fact that he's going to die. Nothing can ease that pain. Yeah, poor Harry's getting more sick. I guess this chapter kind of responds to your whole 4th paragraph pretty well. I love your thinking! I'm so happy you find my story interesting. It surprises me every day that I have as many reviews as I do. It always puts me in a better mood and I never get sick of re-reading them.

Terence: Hey!! I don't even know what to say in my review responses to you anymore since we talk all the time anyways and I think I already responded to your review in an email. I'm glad you like Harry's character and I love the superb adjectives to describe the last chapter!! Thank you so much!! I told my Eng teacher you said he was an incompetent dick and he jumped out the window like Snape and everyone stared until I turned around and asked, "Was that supposed to happen?" Well, maybe not, but my imagination ran away with me and fused life with your wonderful chapter and reviews. LOL. Thank you for all the compliments. They comfort me whenever my English teacher gives me the "you dumbass, why are you in my class" look. Are you serious that you suggested that the people in your English class should read my fic? Wow!! That means so much!! I can't believe you would do that!! Thank you!! This definitely calls for a dedication. Anywho, I hope you like this chapter and I'll talk to you soon.

SubliminalMsgs: Thank you! Don't worry, I won't stop writing, so then you won't have to kill me! You wouldn't want to kill me anyways, because then, who would tell you what happens in the story? LOL. A poem sounds awesome!!! Unfortunately, I can't tell you whether or not Harry will die, but I hope I get a poem either way! LoL.

Stormstar_princess taria: Yay! I love making people cry. Through my story, that is, not in real life. That would just be mean. :) You'll have to see about the empty promises thing. Who can tell whether Harry will die or not before seeing them again. Well I can tell, but my lips are sealed. Hope you liked the chapter!!

LizhowHP: Why thank you! That's probably my favorite part of the scene too, and you and Eowyn of Ithilien are the only ones to comment on it! Lol. I think that means we all like angst! What can I say, angst is fun! Yeah, you have to love my wonderful, "cancer will save us all!" thing. Everyone's just reading it and scratching their head thinking I'm nuts, but I did have a plan see!! Hopefully this makes a bit of sense. It's hard to explain but easy to understand once you get an idea of what the hell I'm talking about. Sigh. With this spell, Harry won't become a squib, he'll die. The spell takes his life away along with his magic and the cancer. Please tell me this makes sense lol. If not, I'll explain further. Hope you liked the chapter!

Maximum Poofy-Pissed Off Queen: You gotta love the Cho bashing. Well, unless you actually like Cho I guess. *shudder* Anywho, Thank you for the lovely words of support. Yay!! I'm so glad I can toy with your emotions!! Thank you soooo much. That's the best compliment ever. I hope I can continue to do that. Hope you liked the chappy!!

Shawn Pickett: Harry's got a plan! A plan that's kind of lose-lose for Harry though. He dies either way. Of course, he will supposedly beat Voldie either way, if the plan works, so at least that's good. I can't wait for you to see more either!! LoL.

o Hell o Kitty o: Neville is clumsy, but I love him anyways. I'm a Senior in high school.

BratPrincess-187: Why thank you! Glad you enjoyed the drama!! Or else? Uh oh. *Locks doors and windows* Well, I hope you liked the chappy then!!

PussyKat: Thank you!! I'm so glad you like all those things about my fic!! Especially about Snape's character since he's one I've put a lot of thought and care into throughout the story! I love the flobberworms for brains comment as I am too obsessed with HP. I love your

poem!!! I can't say whether or not Harry will die or not. I wonder what the general thoughts about it are out there. You know, do people think he is or isn't going to die. What do you think? Take a guess! I really like your poem again. It's really pretty! I'm putting it in my quotes collection if you don't mind! Anywho, hope you liked the chapter!!

Catiechan: Oh yeah! Sad is good. Good catch on the Goodbye. Shows how much hope Harry has, huh? Well he might be right he might be wrong, only time will tell. Ok, Sirius scene in a few chapters!! I promise!! I have no clue what to write about with it, so it probably won't have any major events associated with it, but I'll figure out something to write about. Any suggestions?

Joe: Hehehe In English we say "kill two birds with one stone" but I like your way better! It was a hard scene to write, but I'm glad you liked it. Hope you liked the chapter!

Wandering Shadow: I'm adding another Sirius scene especially for Catiechan, and Remus will be in it a bit as well, with dueling and being teacherish and stuff. LoL. Maybe they'll have an outing if Harry survives until summer when he goes to live with Sirius. Whether he'll make it that far, who knows? (Except for me that is) LoL yes, Voldie should definitely die. I wonder if Harry will do it or not? Hehehe. And you've got to always love Sev and Drac. They're so much fun!

Romm: Of course Snape knows! He carried Harry to the hospital wing when he collapsed in the hallway and it was explained to him then. Lol. Don't worry, I always forget details in fics, I only remember this one so well b/c I wrote it! For the recap, see chapters 16 and 17. Hope you liked the happy!

Leaps: HAHAAHA!!!! I love your review!! I should explain to my teachers that, "well one of my reviewers said that me entertaining people was way more important than school, so that's why I didn't do my homework, you see!"

Sam: Thank you! As you may one day see, I am never flattered more than when a reviewer says I made them cry.

LilynJamesAAF: I'm so happy you remember the plot! Probably b/c I update so often! Most of my fav authors update every few months or have stopped altogether. I'm glad I gave you a new saying! Ooh, "Heartwrenching" *squeals in delight* Thank you!! Lol, my plot to convert you to, or at least like, H/G, R/Hr, is not over yet!! Hopefully you didn't despise this chapter for the fluffiness at the beginning b/twn one of your least fav pairings, but hey, it's part of my evil plot and all so there. Lol. Hope you liked the chappy!

SiriusWolf: Really? You're righting your own fic now? I'll definitely have to read it! What chapter would you have flamed me for? I hate it when people stop writing their stories randomly!! My greatest pet peeve in the world. That's why I've vowed to always finish my fics before even beginning to post them. That way, I know I won't just run out of ideas for it and have it drop off the face of the earth. LOL. Zenon. Disney movies rock. Anyways, hope you liked the chapter!!

Jouve25: Seriously? Tears to the eyes? That's so great!! I think a lot of people misunderstood the fact that this spell won't save Harry, but will kill him. I'm glad you like the plot since that's an pretty key part to the story!! Lol!!

Luinlothana: No problem with the every other chapter reviewing system. You give such wonderfully long reviews, they can sustain me through the chapters you miss lol. I'm glad you approved of the Stensons scene since it was sooo hard to write! Yeah, poor Neville must feel a bit guilty, but we can assume that Harry has convince him that he's forgiven. Don't worry, one day, you will know the ending. LOL

ParanoiaIn2005: Thank you thank you. Lol. Er...I can't tell you b/c I can't tell you if Harry dies or not or when he dies if he does!! Poor Harry, but if he lives until summer, he'll get to stay with Sirius!! That should be comforting!

Darcy101: Thank you for putting me on your favorites and for reviewing!! Those dizzy spells really suck, don't they. Poor Neville really doesn't need anything on his shoulders like guilt, but I'm just

mean and stuck it on him. I'm so happy I made you cry!!! Do I sound weird when I say stuff like that? Probably. Hahaha.

Arctic Wolf2: Good, good. You seem to have been one of the few to catch on to the fact that the spell will kill Harry too. A lot of people seemed to have missed that. I hope this chapter cleared up things a bit. If not, try my fun paper explanation. If it still doesn't make sense, tell me and I'll explain it using a bunch of fun similes until it does make sense. Lol.

Fantagal: *Does the I made someone cry dance* Oh I'm so happy to have mad you emotional. I'm just interesting like that. Here's a tissue! Unfortunately, what I will do to Harry will only be known to me until a later chapter, muahahaha!! Do I sound like Voldemort? Hahaha

Theauthorthatwrites: I'm glad you liked the angst. I definitely had to debate which to categories this fic fit in and I was going to make it drama/angst, but thought people should be warned that there is romance in here. I wanted to put in the "it's not goodbye" line so that when Harry whispers "goodbye" at the end, it would show that he hasn't got much hope for himself, that he's putting up a brave front for everyone, telling them that it'll be fine, when he doesn't believe it himself. Lol. Well, if Harry dies, I hope nobody kills me 'cause then I can't write any more fics!!

Ckat44: Hmm...what will happen? I don't know. Oh wait, yes I do! Too bad I'm not telling anyone aside from my dog, but he doesn't really care. I really thought your fic was creative and original. It's a really great idea to make Harry minister of magic. At the part where he was nominated, my jaw dropped and I got so excited!! I even put it under my favorites. In fact, I see you've updated. I'll definitely read it tomorrow night. I would tonight, but I haven't even started my homework when I have a huge English test tomorrow! Ahhh!

Saz: Are you having a boy or a girl? Do you know what you'll name it? I hope everything's going well with your pregnancy. I'll try to keep the twists coming, but who knows what will happen to Harry in the end? (Besides me of course:)) Hope you liked the chapter!!

Also thanks to: Rain Warrior, Victoria, HangZhang, mickeymoose and crystal, lily, james and sirius. You guys rock.

* Hmm...3 pages just of review responses. Maybe I shouldn't talk so much. Lol. Merlin's beard!! That took me 3 hours!! Argh, but I just love responding to you guys so much. But maybe next time, I'll try to cut it down a little.

Author's Note: Hey all!! It's been awhile. This is because of a hectic schedule, waiting to see if certain reviewers would review, and because many seem to support my slowing down on updates in order to make the story last longer. Congratulations to Saz for her new son. Christopher James is such a cute name!! CAUTION: Lets just say, if you like Cho Chang, you may want to skip this chappy. I don't want to insult anyone, except for Cho. :)

"Wake up, Harry! It's Hogsmeade today!" Harry swatted at the hand that was trying to shake him awake.

"Go 'way Ron," he mumbled into his pillow.

"I don't think so, mate. We're not going to miss breakfast and be late for the Hogsmeade trip. Now I'm giving you to the count of three to get out of this bed. One...Two..." Harry just groaned and buried himself further in his covers.

"Three. All right, you asked for it," Ron said. He then grabbed the edge of Harry's mattress and yanked it upwards. Harry tumbled out of bed landing with a loud thud. He stood up rubbing his hip, with a glare at Ron, who was laughing uncontrollably.

Harry couldn't help himself. He started laughing too. He grabbed his pillow off the floor and chucked it at Ron.

"Thanks for the lovely wake up call," he said sarcastically with a yawn. Ron tossed him his school robes.

"Anytime, mate," he laughed "I'll wait for you in the common room."

Harry groaned and made his way off to the bathrooms for a quick shower.

Ron found Hermione in the common room and kissed her good morning.

“Did you have to pull Harry out of bed again?” she asked. Ron nodded sadly. Though he joked about it with Harry all the time, they both knew that his constant fatigue wasn’t a good sign. Ron always felt guilty denying him his much-needed rest, but at the same time he knew he couldn’t let Harry just sleep through the day.

“I know he appreciates it, Ron, even if he doesn’t say it,” Hermione said quietly. Ron smiled softly at her.

“What would I do without you, ‘Mione?” he asked, playing with her hair.

“Hmm...fail your classes, get into many more fights, not even know we have a library, and probably be perfectly fine with it all,” she teased with a warm smile.

“Perfectly fine? Without you there? Impossible.”

Hermione smiled joyfully at him. She wrapped her hand around his head and kissed him. He gladly returned the favor.

When Harry came down, fully dressed and significantly more awake, he found Hermione and Ron snogging on the couch, oblivious to anything else. Harry didn’t want to interrupt them and wasn’t sure what to do. He started quietly going back up the stairs, but stopped when he heard Hermione calling his name.

“Harry, come on back down.”

Harry turned around shyly. “Er, I don’t want to interrupt you guys. I’ll just go on ahead and you guys can catch up,” he said making his way to the portrait.

His two friends raced up to him, Hermione linking her arm through his. “Don’t worry about it Harry. We want to walk with you to breakfast as always!”

“Yeah, mate, ‘Mione and I can snog anytime. What? What?”

Hermione had reached over and hit Ron's arm, blushing. Harry laughed at his friend's antics.

After breakfast, all the students who were allowed, made their way down to Hogsmeade. The trio first went to the Quidditch shop, to appease Harry and Ron, and then went to the bookstore, for Hermione of course. They went to Honeydukes and bought enough sweets to last them through the rest of the year. Of course, with the way they ate sweets, it was quite possible they wouldn't last through the end of the week.

After a while, Harry told them that he was going to go find Neville or Eloise, to give them some alone time. They protested, but Harry grabbed Hermione's hand and put it in Ron's and told them to have fun.

"Now remember," he called back, "they have that whole 'you must wear clothes and keep them on' policy at the Three Broomsticks so you two might want find somewhere el—AHH!" Harry ran off laughing as his two best friends started chucking sweets at him.

He set off trying to find Eloise, Neville, or his other dormmates. He rounded a corner to the main street and saw what looked like a mob of people. He looked at them curiously.

"There he is!" One of them shouted, pointing straight at Harry. Harry looked all around him to see who they would be talking about, but no one was near him. He began to back away, but the mob quickly trapped him against a wall.

'Oh no,' he thought as he saw the many Quick Quotes Quills and cameras, 'reporters.' There were flashes coming from everywhere and people were shouting questions at him.

"Harry, is it true you've finally found the love of your life?"

"Over here, Harry. Can you tell us about your girlfriend?"

"How did you two meet?"

“Big smile over here, Harry!”

“Is it true you’re planning on marriage right after your schooling?”

“How far have you two gone physically? We’ve been told about the kissing, but your girlfriend wouldn’t tell us more.”

Harry was flabbergasted. Girlfriend? Kissing? Marriage? What the hell was going on?

“Huh?” he asked, quite overwhelmed. “Girlfriend? I don’t have a girlfriend.”

“She told us you’d try to deny it. We’re lucky one of you isn’t trying to hide it,” one reporter said with a wink.

“Who are you talking about? I don’t have a girlfriend!” he insisted desperately. He glanced around for a way to escape, but he was surrounded with his back up against a wall.

“Of course you do! The lovely Ravenclaw Seeker, Cho Chang!” another reporter shouted. Harry’s mouth dropped open and was soon replaced with a scowl.

“I am not dating Cho Chang, so if you please, just leave me alone.” He tried pushing his way past some reporters, but they refused to neither let him through nor believe him, it seemed.

Suddenly, an arm slid onto his shoulders. He looked to his side to find Cho, beaming flirtatiously at the reporters. Harry grabbed her hand and flung it off his shoulder.

“Hello sweetie!” she said brightly. “I know that your concerns about my safety have stopped you from telling people about us, but we’re both so in love it seems a shame not to tell the world!”

Harry glared at her. “We are NOT dating!” he shouted at her and then at the reporters.

“You’re so sweet to try and protect me, honey,” she said to him before turning to the reporters. “If you want proof, I can tell you about a scar he has on his stomach. It’s a few inches long. Now how would I know about that if I haven’t seen under his shirt? Oh whoops!” she giggled. “I think I’m giving a little too much information about the depth of our relationship.”

Harry gaped at her. How did she know about the scar? She must’ve been spying on him in the locker room or while he was asleep in the Hospital Wing or something. He shuddered slightly at the thought.

“Cho, what are you doing? Take all that stuff back, you liar! Tell them it isn’t true!” he growled. The reporters were squirming with glee.

“Show us your stomach, Harry! Prove her wrong! If it isn’t true, you shouldn’t have a scar!” a reporter shouted, camera ready.

“No! Leave me alone! I’m not taking off any of my clothes for you!” he screamed. He had put concealing charms on the scars on his back as always, but as usual, he hadn’t bothered with the one on his stomach since it wasn’t as obvious. He cursed himself for not doing it on that one too. It would be obvious if he cast a concealing spell now.

“Yeah, he doesn’t take them off for anyone else but me!” Cho giggled.

“Come on Harry, let us see!” they begged.

One pointed her wand at him and the next thing he knew, his shirt and sweater was in her hands rather than on his body where they belonged. Harry gasped in horror and wrapped his arms around his bare chest and stomach as the cameras started flashing away. These people were crazy!

“Leave me alone!” he yelled, running right through them, knocking into a few of them as he raced by. It seemed, however, that they weren’t listening to his requests and they began to chase him, snapping photographs and screaming questions.

This was a nightmare come true. He was being chased through Hogsmeade without a shirt on, turning onto random side streets to try to lose them. Many of the other students laughed or stared at him as he ran by, the pack of paparazzi close behind.

“Harry? What in the name of Merlin?”

Harry looked up to see Fred and George staring at him in confusion.

“Help!” he pleaded. They saw the mob of reporters turning the corner to follow him.

Fred ran up and grabbed his arm. He led Harry to a shop nearby where George had ran and unlocked the door. They quickly led him to a counter and shoved him behind it right before the door slammed open.

“Have you seen Harry Potter run through here or by here?”

“Yeah, I saw him heading that way, back toward the castle, why?” George said pointing in the direction of Hogwarts.

The reporters didn’t answer his question of why, but just ran off in that direction. One stopped briefly enough to wave Harry’s shirt and sweater around with a gleeful, “Look! I got his clothes!” she said proudly, hugging the two items to her chest with a huge smile before leaving.

When they were safely out of sight, they pulled Harry to his feet. Fred took off his cloak and handed it to Harry, who gratefully put it on, pulling it closed over his bare chest.

“What was that?” George asked.

Harry quickly relayed the story. The two clucked sympathetically.

“That’s rough mate,” Fred said with a sigh.

Harry finally realized that he'd never seen this store before. He hadn't seen what it was called in all the earlier rush. It looked like it wasn't even open, as there were many boxes and empty shelves.

"Where are we?" he asked curiously. Fred and George both grinned broadly.

"Ah, Harry, we've been meaning to show you," said Fred.

"You see, last year an anonymous investor gave us some money to start up a little joke shop," George said wistfully. Harry grinned.

"Aw, must've been an awfully nice bloke."

"Now, as we said before, he's totally anonymous, this black-haired person."

"Now Fred, don't give too much away. Don't tell him about the glasses or anything."

"Of course not dear brother, as long as you don't mention the lightning bolt shaped scar."

"Hmm...sounds quite dashing," Harry said in mock thoughtfulness.

"Nah, he's really just a scrawny little fifth year with messy hair," Fred said, mussing Harry's hair with a laugh.

"Course, he is getting his clothes ripped off by reporters and all." George added. The three laughed.

"Wow, so you guys really are getting started! This place is going to look great when you get it all ready!" he said enthusiastically, much to the delight of the twins.

They showed him around the shop and told him how they planned to decorate. It was to be called Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes and would be opened by summer. They told him that he would be their honorary customer for life. He could get free stuff there anytime he wanted.

They demonstrated their new pranks and told him about some of the ones they were working on. Despite his protests, they stuffed his pockets with some free pranks and told him to use them to advertise.

"This place is going to put Zonko's out of business!" he told them excitedly.

When he told them that he had better get back to the castle, they volunteered to walk him there.

"We can't let our investor get eaten alive by reporters!" Fred insisted when Harry told them that he'd be fine on his own.

They walked back to Hogwarts, Fred's cloak wrapped tightly around Harry, talking about the joke shop and such.

"So, our young prank tester, there isn't anything going on with you and Cho then? She's really making it all up?" asked Fred curiously.

"Yup. She's just psychotic and obsessive as far as I can tell."

"Hmm...that's good to hear," George mused. Fred nodded in agreement, thinking back to Ginny happily dancing with Harry.

"Why is that good to hear?" Harry asked suspiciously.

"Now we get to do some advertising!" George exclaimed.

"Using the obsessive psychotic as our...er...spokesperson," Fred chimed in with an evil grin. Harry sniggered.

"Don't you mean victim?" Harry asked with a laugh.

"I'd be nice there Harry, 'cause I can always ask for my cloak back," Fred teased.

"Oh I meant it as a compliment," he said with an innocent smile.

They walked through the doors to the castle.

"You coming to the Burrow this summer, Harry? We couldn't believe you couldn't come all last summer!" said George. Harry was suddenly uncomfortable.

"Er...I don't know. It depends on some things," he murmured, trying to sound casual. The twins exchanged confused looks as Harry seemed to almost squirm uncomfortably under their gaze.

"What sort of things?" Fred asked.

"Just some things. Don't get me wrong, I really want to! It just depends on how much time I have." It wasn't a lie! They would just probably take it in a different way than the truth.

"Busy summer, then? Now that Sirius is free, I'm sure you two will have plenty of catching up to do," said George.

"He's been visiting the castle a whole lot, huh? I've been seeing you two walking around all the time. I mean you're spending the whole summer with him! Can't he wait 'til then or is he really that eager to see you?" Fred asked with a smile. A sad look crossed Harry's face. Fred's smile vanished.

"Harry are you okay? Did I say something?" Fred asked with concern.

"Yeah, what's wrong?" George asked.

Harry gave them a weak smile. "Oh nothing. It's nothing."

"Does this have anything to do with what Kota was upset about when she was here? You never did tell us what that was about," George pointed out worriedly.

"Oh that, yeah er...it's fine. It was no big deal," Harry said looking sadly down at the ground.

"Harry, listen, we know something's wrong. Ron's been acting strangely and so have you," Fred said, more serious than Harry had

ever heard him. He put a hand on Harry's shoulder. "You know you can tell us anything, right?"

"Yeah, you're our brother in everything except blood," added George.

"And hair," Harry added with a weak smile, but neither of the twins laughed.

"Harry, tell us what's going on," Fred said seriously.

"I can't. I just...it's nothing. I have to go. I'll give you back your cloak tonight, Fred. Thanks again for the help!" he said, all the while backing away from the twins before turning and running off toward the Gryffindor tower.

"George, I think something is really wrong," said Fred.

"Yeah, but practically everything Harry gets into is seriously wrong," George said, shaking his head.

"You think it's something with You-Know-Who?"

George sighed. "I hope not. I'm praying it's just normal teenage problems for once. But I think we should use some of our most humiliating pranks on that horrible Cho girl. It looks like Harry could use a laugh," George said sadly.

The two walked off toward the kitchens plotting their revenge on Cho Chang.

That night at dinner, there was a sudden cry from the Ravenclaw table. A bunch of girls were shrieking and pointing as others looked and laughed. Harry looked up to see Cho who was flipping out for a very obvious reason. Her skin was currently covered in green scales and her hair had turned into a silver mohawk of feathers. Her eyes alternately flashed green and silver. The Slytherins clapped and whistled loudly in seeing their colors on the Ravenclaw.

Cho was screeching like a banshee as she looked in horror at a small makeup mirror.

“Who did this?!” she screamed at the hall as Professor Sinistra tried to calm her down. “Oh, my beautiful hair,” she moaned as she fingered the feathers.

“Miss Chang, calm down. Madam Pomfrey can surely fix a silly little prank like this,” Professor Sinistra said soothingly, trying to lead her out of the great hall.

“My silky skin! Gone! Whoever did this, I warn you! You will pay!” she screamed.

“Miss Chang, calm down this instant and come with me.”

“I’ll figure out who did this!” she said, pointing a finger toward everyone. “And when I do, I’m going to rip out your heart and make you eat it, you filthy little...”

“ENOUGH!” Professor Sinistra yelled, slamming her hand down on a table. “Fifty points from Ravenclaw for this appalling behavior. You really must find a sense of humor Miss Chang, for this is ridiculous. Now come with me right now or I will have you suspended. If you ever threaten another student like that, I will expel you. Now come.”

Cho sneered at her but followed her silently from the hall. As the door closed, the hall erupted in applause, whether for the prank or for the removal of the bitchy girl, Harry wasn’t sure. He looked up at the twins who both winked at him and began passing business cards around the table.

“Opening this summer,” they quietly informed the Gryffindors. They usually would have just stood up and announced it to the Great Hall, but in light of Cho’s drastic reaction to their little prank, they weren’t so keen to be punished for it.

As Harry was leaving the hall, Fred passed him. He slowed momentarily to whisper, “That one was for you, Harry. Just to prove your money was well invested.”

Harry had to agree. At that moment, he didn’t think he’d ever spent his money so well.

The next morning at breakfast, Harry walked in to find the hall alive with chatter. Many looked up at him and giggled. Some girls looked at him and sighed with disappointment. Others made catcalls and wolf whistles as he walked by.

Harry groaned. It could only mean one thing. Sure enough, as he reached the Gryffindor table, Hermione tried to hide a copy of Witch Weekly.

Ginny looked up at him sadly and then turned away to avoid his gaze. Fred and George shot him looks of sympathy.

“Harry, what the bloody hell is this about you and Cho? And why were you romping around Hogsmeade without a shirt on?” Ron asked. Hermione smacked him with the magazine.

Harry groaned and held his hand out to Hermione, who reluctantly put the magazine in his hand.

“Now Harry, it’s not as bad as it looks, really.” Harry’s stomach dropped as he saw the front cover. It was a picture of Cho, who was kept flipping her hair over her shoulder and flashing a huge smile, and Harry, who was looking very taken aback and kept gawking at the reporters and then Cho. The headline read “Harry Potter in Love?”

He flipped open to the page to find a large picture of Cho. She had obviously posed for photographers.

THE-BOY-WHO-LIVED NOW THE BOY-IN-LOVE?

Harry Potter, hero of the wizarding world, is loved by us all, but it seems he may have finally found someone to love in return. So who is the lucky girl? Cho Chang, a sixth year student of the Ravenclaw house at Hogwarts. This strikingly beautiful girl met Harry soaring above the castle on their broomsticks. As we know, Harry is the Seeker for his house’s Quidditch team and has proved himself to be gifted in the sport. Cho is the Seeker for her own house.

“Sometimes when we play against each other, it’s really difficult because we’re supposed to be competing but when we’re flying alongside each other, we sometimes forget all about the Snitch we’re supposed to be looking for,” says Cho. “It reminds us of the first time we met. I was out for a nighttime fly, when I nearly crashed into someone else. I fell off my broom and would have died, if he hadn’t caught me. When he got me to the ground, I opened my eyes and he was looking down at me with those gorgeous green eyes, and I nearly drowned in them. We spent the night together, talking under the stars. We’ve been together ever since.”

A romantic first meeting has spurred a long-lasting and passionate romance that has Harry Potter fan clubs everywhere in tears. Apparently, Harry wanted to keep their relationship a secret to protect his true love from You-Know-Who along with the hardships of being in the public eye. Cho, however, has decided to make the news of their love public, saying that she loves him too much to keep it a secret.

The pair was seen in Hogsmeade together on a school outing, but Harry seemed quite camera-shy as usual. The slight twist to this love affair? Harry is denying the whole thing. Is it a desperate attempt to protect his loved one from You-Know-Who or is there still hope for the many adoring fans who would love to be on his arm?

His alleged sweetheart gave reporters information about a scar on Harry’s stomach, but the Boy-Who-Lived would neither confirm nor deny its existence. On his day in Hogsmeade, some reporters got out of hand and tried to verify this information for themselves by charming off his shirt. This action resulted in nothing but more mystery as Harry got away before anyone could see. Some say a slight mark on his stomach that is mostly covered may be this alleged scar, while others insist that it’s a shadow. There are no clear pictures of it to end this debate. (See photos on next page and decide for yourself!)

It is easy to see that the boy who’s life the wizarding world has followed since he defeated the Dark Lord as a one-year-old, is turning into quite a dashing teenager. Girls want to date him, boys want to be him, as can be seen with the mere number of fan clubs

dedicated to the Boy-Who-Lived. So the question remains, has Harry Potter finally found love, or is it another crazed fan with no truth to her claims? Only further evidence can tell.

Harry's face turned red and he pursed his lips. He turned to the next page to find pictures of himself running from reporters trying to cover his bare stomach, the bottom of the scar showing in such a way that it could be seen as the shadow of his finger. His naked back was showing and Harry thanked anyone who was listening that he had cast a Concealment Charm on it. There were other pictures of Cho posing, Cho and him in Hogsmeade, with her smiling flirtatiously and him looking flabbergasted. He closed the magazine and rolled it up. Many in the hall were watching him, gauging his reaction.

Harry stood up and walked stiffly over to the Ravenclaw table.

"Cho," he said quietly but menacingly, "I need to talk to you. Outside. Now."

She looked at him slightly reluctantly but then flashed her friends a great smile. She stood up. Harry grabbed her wrist and pulled her after him out of the Great Hall and outside the back doors.

The students in the Hall looked at each other momentarily, before everyone broke out in excited grins and ran out after them, leaving only the staff members, who liked to stay out of stupid quarrels when there was no risk for it to break out in violence.

Harry dragged Cho out a little ways from the castle. They were surrounded by Hogwarts students minutes later, but Harry found he didn't care. "What the hell is this?" he growled showing her the cover of Witch Weekly.

"I just offered our story to the press, Harry. We shouldn't hide it anymore," she said cheerily.

"This garbage isn't true and you know it! Everyone knows it Cho! I can't believe you fed some fake story to the press for attention. Well it doesn't only affect you, Cho! I'm trying to get away from the bloody

newspapers and you think this helps?" he yelled waving the magazine in the air before throwing it to the ground.

"Stop denying it Harry. I have proof. How else would I know about the scar on your stomach if you didn't show me?" she said, more to the crowd around them than actually to the boy in front of her.

"That's another thing. What the hell were you doing spying on me? Were you watching me while I was changing or something? Why won't you leave me alone?"

"Because we love each other, Harry," she screamed. "We're dating in case you didn't know. Just look at the magazine!"

"I DO NOT LOVE YOU! Hell, I don't even like you, as I thought I made clear before. I hate the way you think you're the best thing to ever grace the halls of this school. I hate how you think everyone is beneath you! I hate how you trash people, especially my own friends! And I always hate two-timing rats who would sell their supposed friends down the river for their own benefit. That's what you are, Cho, as you've made apparent with this little stunt you pulled," Harry ranted with a glare at Cho who was obviously getting angry, her face twisting further into a scowl with each sentence.

The crowd was eating up the drama of the argument. The females looking especially happy to find out the two were obviously not together. Ginny was practically beaming. Many of the guys looked equally delighted that Cho wasn't taken. Everyone looked at Cho to see what her response would be.

She looked furiously into Harry's eyes. She suddenly smacked Harry in the face with all her might, her long fingernails leaving four scratches that immediately turned red with blood. She pointed an accusing finger right in his face and glared at him.

"We will be together, Harry, at least in the eyes of the public. Don't try to stop it or I'll humiliate you so badly you won't know what hit you," she hissed quietly so that only Harry could make out what she was saying.

Harry glared at her and swatted her finger away, out of his face. "Don't worry about humiliating me, Cho, you're doing a perfectly fine job of humiliating yourself," he said calmly, but loudly enough for everyone else to hear. Fred and George cheered at this and were soon joined by a majority of the crowd.

Harry turned away from Cho and walked away, the crowd parting to let him through. Many girls ran after him asking if he was all right. Harry politely told them that he was, but didn't pursue conversation. He finally found Ron and Hermione, who were each glaring daggers at Cho's retreating form, surrounded by her own friends and male admirers.

Hermione wanted to drag him up to the Hospital Wing to heal his cuts, but Harry absolutely refused. He only wanted to go eat breakfast before his classes. Plus, Harry was advanced in his knowledge of medical spells and knew how to heal the scratches himself, which he did, leading to another congratulatory rant on Hermione's part for all his studying. She didn't mention the reason why Harry had been studying medicine in the first place, much to his relief.

Ginny came in and sat next to him, seeming in a much brighter mood than she had been in before.

A/N: Phew, long chapter there! I always wonder why Harry doesn't get hounded by reporters and fans more often, since he's been in the newspaper and magazines and they know what he looks like. I mean, he never gets stopped when walking around Diagon Alley or Hogsmeade, both which are Wizzarding places!! So I decided to make one myself to get it out of my system. Hope you all enjoyed. Please review! I love to hear your feedback and reviews make me so happy!! Will write for reviews!!

Terence: Ah, my accomplice in crime, well sort of. Author of hilarious fanfics. It smells like gum and I don't know why. How are you? I wish I had baby English cousins with baby British accents!! I love

English accents! The other day, I was in Target with my sister and a guy passed us who was speaking with a British accent. My sister and I stalked him around the whole store, being very stealthy I might add, trying to hear his accent! Thank you for all your wonderful compliments! They make me blush so much! Hope you liked the chappy!

BratPrincess-187: Drama and angst forever!! OMG you are my new best friend. Moulin Rouge is the best movie ever and I LOVE the tango dancing scene. I also love the scene where he's walking away from the stage, and then Nicole Kidman starts singing and then, HE STARTS SINGING!! Oh man, I love his voice there. I actually do like slash, as comes for a bit of a shock for many, but I'm not into the whole cross-dressing deal. But I did check out that fic and I really liked how it was put together with the flashbacks. I just couldn't deal with the cross-dressing thing. C'est la vie!! Thank you for recommending it, though! It's so fun to meet another M.R. fan! You rock!

PussyKat: Thank you for reminding me! I honestly hadn't realized it had been 9 days! I'm glad you liked the part with Ron finding out! I like to think its randomness is somewhat surprising. When this fic is over, it'll be so sad! It's my baby! Of course, I'll just go onto the next one, but I really put my heart and soul into this one, which is why I'm writing more and more scenes into it, to stretch it out and make it better. Anyways, it will still be a while until the end. Hope you liked the chapter!

LizhowHP: I'm glad you understand the confusing things I try to say. Man, Sev just doesn't want to let loose! Someone should really get him drunk or something. Hahaha Hope you liked the chappy! Fantagal: lol AHHH!! You do not realize how terrified I am of tickling, no joke!! I probably would piss my pants, right before dropping dead of lack of oxygen! And then where would you be with no one to finish this fic!! Lol, whether Harry will live or not is still the great mystery isn't it? Jouve25: Hermione probably won't be finding out about the abuse. We can all guess what her reaction would be anyways! I'm glad I've been able to make this whole cancer and spell thing make sense! The ending will be very ...fun ...if I do say so myself. I love Harry so it would be fun to make him live, but I love angst, so it would be fun to make him die. The mystery lives on!

Saz: Congratulations!! I love the name you gave your son! How's he been this last week? Are you losing a lot of sleep? Don't worry, I'll remember about the twists!

Shadowarwen: Thank you! Whether Harry will die or not is a mystery to all besides myself! Muahahahahaha....uh...nevermind. I can't believe I made you cry so hard! That's wonderful news! LOL well for me at least! I read your stories "Don't fall Away" and "HP and the Keeper of Power," which combined to be an awesome story. Very entertaining!! I'm going to read "the Pain Seeker" next, probably this weekend when all my tests are done. You're a great author!

Dra: Thanks! I love your penname for some strange reason!! I'm not sure about how many chapters are left, but I'd guess about eight maybe. I hope more though! I'm trying to stretch it by adding more scenes and such. I guess we'll see! Oh, and I can't give you any hints about the ending of course, but stick around and find out!!

RileyRiddle: Thank you. I'm so sorry that you're suffering from Leukemia. I've never been through cancer myself, but have known many people that have had several types of it as it runs in my family. My good friend is in remission from it which has made me so happy. I hope the same happens for you. Hope you continue to enjoy this fic!

o Hell o Kitty o: Moulin Rouge is the best movie ever. I don't have time!! LOL. I've already written this entire story. I squeeze in time to write more scenes, fix it up, respond to reviews, and post, by leaving my homework until about midnight. I also write out scenes while babysitting and during class sometimes. It's worth it when I get reviews. Now you know how important they are to me!! What grade are you in? Anywho, hoped you liked the chappy.

Peramiell: Thank you so much!! I'm glad you like it!! I hope you like this chappy!!

Kamahpfan: Thank you! I really try to have my fic to be multi-dimensional, with angst, drama, humor, romance, and whatever else I can try to squeeze in there. Shh...I'll tell you a secret: I love seeing Harry in pain and agony too. What do you mean that was obvious?

Lol. This doesn't necessarily mean I'll make Harry die though. I might, I might not. We'll see. Hehehehe. Hope you liked the chapter!

SiriusWolf: Lol, I have the Lizzy McGuire soundtrack. I love #4. Thanks for the compliments. They always mean a lot coming from you since you're definitely harder to please than most, which is a good thing. Keeps me in check and all and makes me feel extra proud when you tell me I did a good job! I'll have to check out those other fics you mentioned when I'm not overwhelmed with tests and homework.

Catiechan: Guess what. I just wrote your scene!! I hope it's okay!!! I think it'll be in the next chapter! In fact, I think it pretty much is the next chapter. Lol. Thank you so much for telling me to write it because I think it definitely adds to the story!!

LilynJamesAAF: lol. You know why I love you? I don't either. Lol. Kidding. It's cool that you read this fic despite the H/G, R/H and make it be known that you're not a fan of that couple. It makes me want to either convert you or write you an H/Hr story. (Don't get your hopes up, that's one couple I think I'd have a hard time writing!) Well you rock!! Hope you liked the chapter!!

ParanoiaIn2005: Harry and Snape are far from pals, but there's a kind of mutual respect growing there, possibly. Voldie's greed is very useful, I must say! Yeah, that would be sad if Sirius has a dying godson in his house. It would also be sad if Harry dies before summer. Then again, I've been told a majority of my fic is sad, so it kind of falls into the trend, huh? Then again, he may live by some miracle! Only time will tell muahahaha!

Ckat44: Your fic is so fun! Very very creative! I can't tell you what will happen of course, but you'll see. I was thinking of doing a very angst ghost Harry short story, where Harry comes back for one day after he dies (keep in mind, totally different fic here.) I know, I hate when it says someone's updated and you can't get to their new chapter.! Anyways, I hope you liked the chapter.

Theauthorthatwrites: Lol. Trust me, I try, I really do. But it takes so long to respond to reviews and such, not to mention the homework, the studying, the school, the friends, the family, the random stuff I must do. Actually, many people are telling me to slow the fic down so it'll last longer. I'm doing better than most of my fav authors though who update about once a month if even that much. Lol. Yes, Harry is the-boy-who-lived, but he's also the-boy-in-love apparently! We will see!!

Thundering Lights: I'm so sorry!! I just never got your review that time!! I would never just skip over you! You rock!! I did notice though. It made me sad. I'm glad you actually did review though!! It just got messed up. I can totally relate to whacko computer happenings. Er...Hermione probably won't learn about Harry's summer. *Ducks behind chair* Sorry! But I will be putting some more of her into the fic. I just realized there's not enough of her in here, so poof, I'm writing a sick Harry scene with Hermione there. I love being the author. Hope you liked the chapter!

Also thanks to: leaps (good idea, too bad my Eng. teacher's an asshole and doesn't exactly appreciate creativity), Romm (Nah, one word boosts aren't enough to keep up my ego!), leigh, Arctic Wolf2, ginnyNHarrysecretlove (love the username), Shawn Pickett (Snape...human? you're right, the apocalypse is here!), EriEka127 (you got it!), angel74 (u read the chapter 3 times? Thanks!! I'm glad you like it!!), Rain Warrior, rhinemjr, Maikafuniel (Thank you! I hope you continue to like it!), tati1 (thanks! Don't have an aneurysm! Just keep reading and reviewing!!)

ALRIGHT, SOMETHING SERIOUSLY WRONG WITH THE REVIEW RESPONSES THAT I CAN'T FIX. SOME OF YOUR NAMES AREN'T BOLDED AND SOME OF THEM WON'T GO INTO A NEW PARAGRAPH. LIZHOWHP, LOOK IN PUSSYKAT'S REVIEW RESPONSE FOR YOURS IF YOU CAN'T FIND IT. FOR SOME REASON, THEY SEEM STUCK TOGETHER.

Author's Note: Hey everyone. Another chapter another day! I dedicate this chapter to TheEverFalling for her beautiful picture that I love so much and appreciate. I have been swamped with homework and such. In fact, I have a huge ass civics test tomorrow and I am so screwed, but I'll update anyways, out of the goodness of my heart (or to procrastinate studying, whichever). So, my sister's helping me type as I "study." Hope you all like the chapter!! Please review! I live off of them. (My sister says that threats work well, but then she thought again and decided that they never work. She's weird. And sooo supportive...not. Just kidding!!! Now she's threatening me with physical abuse. She writes for , you guys should read her stories!! They're really awesome. Her penname is Torrlev. Read it and I'll give you...Ruffles cheddar cheese chips.) And check out HarryGonePunk's fic in my favorites if you're in for a good laugh!! Anyways, on with the story!!

* * * * *

At lunch, Harry met Eloise and Neville in the library for a last minute studying session for a test in potions. Eloise had potions for her next class and was nearly hyperventilating in anxiety. Harry poured over the chapter with her and Neville, answering their questions quickly, trying his best to feed them clues to remembering the information.

When the bell rang, all the color drained from Eloise's face. She frantically began scanning things, flipping pages wildly. Harry gently took the book from her and skimmed the last part of the chapter quickly.

"Don't worry, I'll walk you part way to your class and explain this last bit to you," he explained as Eloise tried to grab the book from him. Neville ran off to Charms, and Harry walked along the corridors with Eloise, quickly explaining the last bit to her and then asking her questions about what they had studied. She answered many of the questions correctly, but also froze on a great deal of the ones that Harry was certain she knew the answers to.

“Just remember that Kartin weed and Boomslang skin react explosively together. Think “Ka” from Kartin and “Boom” from Boomslang. Ka boom. Explosive.”

“Ka boom. Right,” she said nodding her head vigorously. “Kartin and Boomslang are explosive. Ka boom. Ka boom. Ka boom.”

Many students looked at Eloise oddly as they passed. She was walking down the corridor repeating the words “Ka boom” with each step, so Harry could understand. He stopped her at the point where he had to turn down another corridor.

“Listen, you’ll do fine. You’ve as prepared as you can be, probably more so than the rest of the class, so just do your best. You just need to calm down. Think of something besides the test for the rest of the way, okay?” he said, giving his pre-test pep talk.

Eloise took a deep breath. “Okay. Calm is good. Harry what the hell can I think of besides the test?” she asked him desperately.

“Elwine! Hey Elwine!” a voice called.

The two looked up curiously toward the voice. Eloise’s jaw dropped while Harry almost laughed in surprise. Roger Davies was making his way over. Eloise frantically smoothed down her hair.

“Hey Elwine,” he said as he got to them, shooting her a smile. He looked at Harry. “You’re Harry Potter, right? I heard about what Cho’s been doing to you.”

“Who hasn’t?” Harry said with a weak grin.

“Don’t worry. Everyone knows she’s mad. She comes across so nice at first and then, wham, out comes this crazed beast,” he said punching his fist into his hand at the “wham” to emphasize his point.

“Tell me about it,” Harry said with a laugh.

Roger turned back to Eloise. “So, what’s your next class, Elwine?”

Eloise blushed. "Actually, it's Eloise. I have potions."

"Oh I'm sorry. I could have sworn you told me Elwine, but it was so loud in there I also thought you said you were in Huffleclaw," he said with a laugh. Eloise laughed nervously, trying to hide her crimson face and avoid Harry's smiling eyes. "Anyways, my class right now was canceled so why don't I walk you to the dungeons?"

Eloise looked at him in awe. "Er...what? No. I mean yes! Yes!" she sputtered.

"Well, I have to run. Good luck on the test, Eloise!" he called as he walked backward down the hall.

She shot him a blank look. "Test?" She shrugged and walked off with Roger, positively glowing.

That evening, Harry knocked on Lupin's office door. It was immediately opened to reveal a grinning Sirius who swept Harry up into an affectionate hug.

"Hey kiddo," he said, ruffling Harry's hair.

"Hey Sirius," Harry said with a smile, running a hand through his hair in an attempt to undo Sirius' messing it up. It really was messy enough as it was without people making it even more so. "Hey Remus," he waved to his professor who was sitting casually at his desk. He was finally getting the hang of calling him Remus in private, though it sounded strange to Harry after calling him Professor Lupin for so long and still having to do so in public.

"Hey there, Harry. How are you feeling?" he asked, as Harry sunk into one of Remus's comfortable chairs. It was now the customary first question he was asked when he went to Lupin's office to see him and Sirius. They took turns asking it and Harry had long ago quit insisting that they needn't ask that question every time.

"I'm feeling fine, thanks," he answered without his usual roll of the eyes, because in truth, he was feeling slightly sick.

"So, tell us about this soap opera that you call life," Sirius said as he put his feet up on Remus's desk. He always found Harry's stories amusing. Harry told him about Cho's latest claims, the Weasley twins' prank shop, the newspaper article, his fight with Cho, and the prank the twins pulled on her.

Sirius was in stitches when Harry described it to him, with Remus adding in helpful bits of description. He claimed that Hagrid had seen her on her way to the hospital wing and asked Professor Sinistra if he could teach this strange creature in his class, causing Cho to go into a spitting rage. Harry wasn't sure if this was true, but thought it was hilarious nonetheless.

"These Weasley twins sound very promising. We'll definitely have to check out their shop this summer, eh Harry?"

Harry nodded enthusiastically. "Yeah, it's going to be so great!"

"Oh no," Remus said with a chuckle, looking at Sirius, "see that look, Harry? That's Sirius's evil scheming look. It means that he either is making plans for the pranks or for helping the Weasley twins with some tips from a Marauder."

"Actually, I was thinking about food, but those are great ideas, Remy. I'll have to do that," he said with a sly wink.

Harry then sat back as he prepared for a Marauder story, as he could now tell when one was coming.

"So, Harry, has Padfoot ever told you about the time when the Defense teacher in our sixth year found him strolling around in his Animagus form and wanted to keep him as a class pet?" Remus said with a sly grin.

"Thanks Moony, I generally try to keep that blocked from my memory," Sirius said with a glare at the now laughing werewolf.

“Oh, well now I really want to hear this one. Sounds embarrassing,” Harry said with a grin. He knew that Sirius would now be itching to tell the story despite his embarrassment to entertain Harry.

“Well, Prongs Jr., if you really want to hear it, who am I to deny you the pleasure? It all started when I was walking around the school as Padfoot after curfew. That’s when Madam Spinkly found me, squealed, exclaiming how adorable I was—”

Remus snorted.

“—and slipped a collar over my neck. That’s when my troubles began...”

Sirius continued telling the story of how the frightening woman had put pink bows on his ears, gave him a bright pink collar, and painted his claws pink. Thankfully, Remus and James had figured out what had happened through the Marauder’s map and some well-placed eavesdropping. They created a distraction with Dungbombs and convinced Peeves to sing a creative song about Madam Spinkly’s sex life. Remus unlocked the door letting a traumatized Sirius escape. Remus added that Sirius had transformed back into human as he ran, forgetting about the bows in his hair, the pink collar on his neck, and his pink toenails, until he ran into Lily who asked if he had decided to become a cross-dresser with her fake innocent look.

Harry perked up with interest especially at this last part. He rarely got to hear about his mother.

“What was my mum like?” he asked shyly. Both the adults looked at him sympathetically.

“Ah,” sighed Remus with a look of fond reminiscence on his face, “your mother, Harry, was the most wonderful person that I’ve ever met.”

“She was beautiful. She looked like an angel, though I often thought she had a devilish streak about her personality,” Sirius added.

"She this gorgeous red hair and brilliant green eyes," Remus said, smirking at Harry who blushed. "Yeah, you definitely have your mother's eyes."

"Well they look like your mothers, though they seem to work like your father's," Sirius added in reference to Harry's glasses.

"She had a wicked sense of humor and was absolutely brilliant, but she never let it go to her head."

"Yeah, she never flaunted it aside from using both to make fun of us with jokes that only Moony understood. Your dad was mighty lucky to get her Harry, because I would have married her if he didn't," Sirius said fondly.

"So would've I. Or any guy for that matter. She was so kind to everyone and wasn't prejudice. She sure put us in our places a few times after teasing Snape."

"My mum stood up for Snape?" Harry asked, surprised. He was absolutely drinking up this information of his mother. He had never known she was such a good person.

"Oh yeah, many times. Same with other Slytherins and, well, everyone who needed it. She had a heart of gold, Harry, and I'm not just saying that," Sirius said. "You know who she reminds me of?" he asked.

"Who?" Harry said with extreme interest.

"You."

Harry paused. "Me?"

"Oh definitely," Remus butted in. "You have parts of your dad's personality, but you have the same heart as Lily, and that is saying something."

Harry grinned broadly and rested his head back against the seat as Sirius began telling the story of how James had tried to win Lily's heart.

"So then, at the Christmas party, James called Lily over and Remy and I conjured up some mistletoe over their heads. Lily told him she admired his determination and then gave him their first kiss..."

"Sirius," Remus whispered.

"And then your dad asked her out and she said yes. Then we had to figure out where they would go. We finally decided..."

"Sirius!" Remus hissed. Sirius looked up at him questioningly and Remus pointed to Harry. Sirius followed his gaze to find that Harry had fallen asleep in the chair.

"Guess I got a little carried away," Sirius said sheepishly. "It is a bit late."

He stood up and walked over to Harry. Noticing the sleeping boy sweating slightly, Sirius put a curious hand to his forehead and frowned.

"I think he has a fever, Moony," he said somberly, taking in Harry's shivering. "He's getting worse."

Remus shook his head sadly. "I know. He hides it so well I sometimes forget, but then I'll see the signs and remember that he's...that he's fifteen years old and dying."

Sirius sighed and brushed the hair away from the sleeping Harry's face. "And the worst part is that we barely know him. I mean, we're trying to make up for it now, but how much is it going to do when we weren't there for him when he was growing up with those horrible monsters? I just can't help but think of all the time I've missed. If only I had broken out sooner or something. I should have broken out the minute I heard he was staying with Lily's horrible sister," Sirius said quietly.

"I know, Padfoot." Remus said in a hushed voice. "Trust me, if I'd could go back in time, I'd have gotten my brain into gear and actually spent ten seconds thinking about who Harry was staying with, rather than wallowing in mourning for years on end. I would have got him out of there. But we can't go back in time, so this 'should have' game is useless. All we have is the present so all we can do is work with that."

Sirius smiled at him weakly. "You were always the smart one, Remy." He turned to Harry. "Hey kiddo," he said softly. "Time to get up. I don't think you want me carrying you into the Gryffindor dorms. Come on, Harry. Let's get you to bed."

Harry's eyes fluttered open tiredly.

"What time is it?" he asked sleepily.

"Late," Sirius said. "Definitely passed my bedtime and definitely passed curfew."

"Sorry for falling asleep on you guys," Harry mumbled as he climbed unsteadily to his feet. He had to clutch the arm of the chair as a dizzy spell came and went.

"That's okay, Harry. Padfoot's going to walk you up to your dorm so you don't get in trouble and I'll see you in class tomorrow," Remus said fondly.

"Yeah, lets get you to bed, kiddo. You have a fever," Sirius said, grabbing Harry's cloak and placing around the shivering boy's shoulders.

"I do?" he asked with a yawn. A slightly sick expression settled over his face. "Oh. Well, bye Moony."

"Goodnight Harry," Remus waved as Harry and Sirius walked out the door into the hall. Harry shuffled along, occasionally putting a hand to his face to feel the coolness against his burning face. Sirius noticed.

"Maybe we should go to the Hospital Wing instead," Sirius suggested worriedly.

"No, I have fever-reducing potion in my dorm. It's not bad, don't worry."

"I always worry about you," Sirius said with a sad smile. Harry looked up at him.

"Well, you don't have to, really."

"Of course I do, Harry. You're like a son to me. I'll always worry about you 'cause I love you."

Harry stopped in his tracks and looked up at Sirius in wonder.

"Harry, are you okay? What's wrong?" Sirius asked in a near panic, unsure of the cause of Harry's behavior.

"Yeah, I'm fine. It's just, nobody's ever said that to me before," he said quietly, looking away.

Sirius felt a flash of hatred toward the Dursleys and sympathy for Harry. He couldn't believe he had so little time with Harry before he'd be ripped away.

"Well, it's true. Come here," he said, pulling his godson into a hug, praying to anyone who would listen to let Harry live.

Harry, meanwhile, was suddenly wishing he hadn't done what he did. The truth was that he was scared to die, despite what he let people believe. And now there was someone who loved him? Someone who thought of him as family? He hadn't thought he would ever have something as precious as this, but of course, fate only let him know about it after he'd performed the spell. He mentally scolded himself for being so selfish, wishing it was someone else besides him.

And then, he couldn't help it. All the stuff that had been secretly plaguing him: the Dursleys, the constant pain from the cancer, feelings of being the third wheel within the Golden Trio, the stress of

keeping so many secrets, fear of dying, and the sense of loss he was already beginning to feel, all just came out in a wave of tears.

He clutched the back of Sirius's robes and sobbed into his shoulder, as if trying to make sure he wouldn't leave. He silently prayed that Sirius wouldn't think less of him for this breakdown, but he couldn't stop the tears from falling and he needed Sirius there.

Sirius pulled his godson into a tighter hug and rubbed his back comfortingly.

"It's okay. It's going to be all right," he whispered.

"But it's not. It's just not," Harry whispered. Sirius couldn't deny that Harry was right. There was nothing to say so he just stood there in the low-lighted, empty hallway and let Harry cry.

A few days later, Harry had a potions lesson on a "good day." When Snape barked that they turn in their homework, Harry quickly wrote his initials instead of his name at the top.

Snape picked up his paper, glancing briefly at the top as he had he last few potions lessons. Harry saw the acknowledgment glimmer in his eyes before grabbing the next student's assignment. Before the lesson began, Harry saw Snape flick his wand, sending a pale green light discreetly into the fireplace. Harry guessed it would be going to Dumbledore's office as a signal.

Snape briefly explained the potion they would be making and listed the ingredients on the blackboard, purposely switching two. He instructed them to begin. A few minutes later, a house elf came in as planned.

"Mr. Snape, sir, Mr. Dumbledore is wanting to see you," he squeaked.

"Can't this wait?" he asked annoyed to keep up pretenses. "I'm teaching a class."

"It is urgent sir. Mr. Dumbledore said it will be brief."

Snape sighed and got up.

"I will be gone extremely briefly. I trust that you incompetent fools can last a few minutes without me. I expect NO fooling around, I will know if you do and the punishments will be severe," he said ominously before sweeping out of the room, robes billowing behind.

"I wonder what that's all about," Neville whispered to Harry, looking around nervously as if expecting to find Snape still hiding in a corner. Harry just shrugged. He took a long time chopping up his Mandora root to stall. Suddenly, he heard a concerned whisper.

"Hey, Hermione, Ron, isn't the potion supposed to turn blue?" asked Seamus who was staring at his and Dean's bright red potion.

"I thought so, but ours is red too. I'm sure I followed it correctly!" Hermione frowned.

"Why is this potion red?" asked Malfoy. Harry threw in the second of the two switched ingredients and watched as his and Neville's began to grow red.

"Ours is too," he said, pretending to be perplexed.

Now, about how the class's potions had turned red. Everyone else had stopped adding ingredients. Students began flipping through their notes trying to figure out what was wrong.

Suddenly, all of the red potions exploded. Harry instinctively threw his hands up to shield his face. When he didn't feel the potion hit, he looked up to see that the potion had frozen midair in front of him and Neville, who had ducked behind him. He dropped his hands and the potion fell to the ground, to the amazement of those who were watching him.

"Wow," breathed Neville, who was peeking out from behind Harry in awe.

The room was a disaster. Everyone was covered in the potion except for Harry and Neville. Everything was in disarray and a fire had

broken out. Harry jumped up, purposely leaving his wand “dropped” under his desk. He raced over to the fire and put up his hands, palms toward the flames.

“What the bloody hell are you doing, Potter, warming your hands?” Malfoy yelled.

Harry ignored him, concentrating on coldness. The flames died quickly leaving a few icicles hanging from the charred desks where it had been burning.

“Ow,” some students began whimpering. Many were brushing at their arms and face, trying to wipe off the potion or stop the effects of it.

“What’s it doing?” Harry asked Hermione, concerned. She was furiously scrubbing her arms with her cloak even though all the potion was off.

“It’s really tingly, but so much that it hurts; like pins and needles but painful,” she whimpered.

“All right, hold still,” he instructed holding his hands out, palms facing her. He closed his eyes and concentrated on making the tingling go away. Through his eyelids he could see a yellowish light, which he assumed was coming from himself. He could sense the tingling diminish.

“Did that help?” he asked hopefully, opening his eyes.

Hermione looked at him in wonder. “That was amazing Harry, it’s totally gone!” she said, a look of awe on her face.

Harry began doing small groups at a time. At first, Malfoy refused to be involved, but the annoying pain eventually made him cave in and join the last group, looking away with a scowl the entire time.

Harry then walked over to the locked cabinets and opened them, murmuring “Alohomora” but without using a wand. The cabinet doors burst open to reveal the cleaning supplies and rags. He grabbed a

piece of cloth and went back to his seat to recover his wand, wiping off the potion that had soaked it.

When the silence in the room became obvious, Harry looked up to find everyone staring at him.

“You did all that? And without a wand?” Dean asked in amazement.

Harry shrugged.

“But how?” Blaise Zabini asked, jaw open.

“I don’t know, I just did.”

At that moment, Snape re-entered, seeing the disaster that was his classroom. “What happened in here?” he asked, looking as if he were about to explode with anger. Harry wasn’t quite sure if he was acting or not. Looking around at the mess, the prospect of cleaning it was enough to make anyone irritated, and Snape was not known for his carefree attitude.

Nobody wanted to speak up. Finally, a nervous Hermione stepped forward.

“Something was wrong with the potion, sir, everyone who added the Boxwood and powdered Diadema had their potions turn red and explode.”

“What are you talking about?” He looked at the board. “Never mind, if you don’t want two hundred points docked from each of your houses, make this room sparkling clean in ten minutes,” he growled lividly.

Every student scrambled for rags. At an unprecedented speed, Slytherins and Gryffindors worked together to clean the room while Snape glared at all of them.

Seven minutes later, the room was in pristine condition. “Now, get out of my classroom this instant,” he barked menacingly. “But Potter,

detention tonight an hour before dinner. I know you're responsible for this mess."

Everyone escaped the room within thirty seconds, in a stampede racing to put the maximum distance between themselves and the dungeons.

"I think we all might have to hire body guards before seeing Snape again after that," Ron said as he threw his things down before collapsing onto the common room couch. "I can't believe the git gave you detention, mate. It wasn't your fault!"

"Are you really that surprised?" Harry asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Well, I guess not really." He shrugged.

"Harry, I can't believe you did all that wandless magic! Most people couldn't even do that with a wand!" Hermione said.

Harry shrugged. "It's one of my good days, I guess. Besides, in my dueling lessons they taught me how to do magical things without knowing exact spells."

"Still, that was amazing!" Ron exclaimed.

"Are you feeling okay now?" Hermione asked softly.

"Yeah, I feel fine. I don't feel sick at all," he answered truthfully. "Let's go down to lunch early since we're out of class, I'm starving!"

Hermione and Ron grinned brightly as they always did when Harry was hungry.

"You're on," said Ron. "We'll have them cook up a celebration feast in honor of being in the first class that nearly blew up Snape's classroom!"

They all chuckled and made their way down to lunch.

* * * * *

A/N: Hey all, sorry for the few and short review responses, but I really am crunched for time. If my sister hadn't helped me, I wouldn't have even been able to post or respond to any reviews at all! What can I say, life is hectic!!! Reviews lift my spirits though, so don't hesitate in pressing that little button and dropping me a word or two!!!

* * * * *

Dadaiiro: Mmm...Cho torture is so fun. The Weasleys rock, and they do want Harry and Ginny together, I mean Harry's such a babe. Malfoy will make his reappearance soon, sort of *evil smirk*. Hope you like the chapter!

Luinlothana: Though the idea of having Voldie kidnap Cho is appealing, I wouldn't give her the satisfaction of the drama. We'll have to see what happens to her. Of course I can't tell you the ending, but I find your guesses amusing, and I like the twins, too. I guess you'll see what happens!

MissPanther: Why thank you! Cho is soooo horrible. Ron and Hermione rock as a couple. Thank you so much for putting me on your favorites list! Those scenes are my favorites, too. Don't worry, I'll definitely finish this story, and probably make other stories, too. I hope you continue to enjoy the story!

Shawn Pickett: Hahaha, pranks are a great idea, as Fred and George have taken into consideration. Death Eaters would only be giving her the satisfaction of the drama that she wants so badly, but karma will bite her in the ass, don't worry.

SiriusWolf: I rule my life by procrastination. You got your wish about Harry and Sirius, but my plans for Fred and George come into play later. And I'll have to check out those movies that you recommended some time (when I'm not swamped with homework, that is!)

Saz: Yeah, my mother complained for about four years about never getting sleep, I guess we were some pretty rowdy kids. Hope you're enjoying life as a parent (that is besides not being able to sleep) and congratulations!

o Hell o Kitty o: Cho was spying on Harry while he was changing in the Quidditch locker rooms, that creepy stalker. Well, what can you do. The story is about 3/4ths of the way done, and I'll probably write after this, if I can find the time that is!

Terence: Hey Terence, how's it going, can't wait for your next chapter and thank you! Hope things are going well and say hi to Sirius for me! We should set him and Louise the boombox up for a play date! Can't wait to hear from you, and hope you like the chapter!

Paranoiain2005: I love long reviews! They are my fuel *chug-a-chug-a-choo-choo* (Celebony's sister wrote that, she is not insane—but lock your doors in case) Fred and George aren't finding out quite yet, but they'll definitely be in the fic, they're not going to drop off a cliff into nowhere-land.

Temporary Insanity: There wasn't proof in the books, but as Ron and Hermione's best friends, Harry saw the chemistry between them far before it became obvious (at least in this fic). What's a baka? But anyway, Harry might die and Harry might live...you'll just have to wait and see. Yeah, the Duke only reminds me of Draco because of the hair—nothing else. Draco will make an appearance, but he's laying low for now. Don't worry, he's still in the fic. Secrecy is a big theme in this story. Well, Cho is a typical girly girl, in this fic, that is, and she's popular, very concerned with her looks, and of course, her reputation. That's why we love to hate her! Because she has no depth to her shallow existence.

Thundering Lights: Not reviewing makes my updates slower because I always wait to see if my reviewers will review. Yes, they will find out eventually, and Hermione will be in this fic in other ways, so don't you worry.

PussyKat: Yes, random would definitely be a word to describe my story. Keeps ya wondering *shifts eyes*. Cho was spying on Harry in the locker room. I would give you guys a flashback in the next chapter, but it just doesn't "flow with my ebb". Thank you for bugging me about updates, it keeps me on my toes.

theauthorthatwrites: Whoa! That's so cool that you're a guy and you like romance, you'll make somebody very happy someday! If you want to kill Cho...be my guest, or maybe I can join you! And Ginny and Harry rock the world and one day I might write a Harry/Ginny romance fic.

Ckat44: Thanks, I like my pace, too: gives me some resting time in between. Yeah, I can imagine that the Harry ghost story idea would be sad to write. Hope you like the chapter!

Maximum Poofy-Pissed Off Queen: Yeah, I hate Harry/Cho fics...I don't even read them. Anyway, I have to ask, why were you up at 4:45 in the morning? I could never stay up that late. But I know what you mean about serious lack of good FF's because I can't find very many these days. Well, hope you like the chapter.

Ratgirl: Well, you got what you wished for, here's another Sirius scene!

Catiechan: Here's your scene, delivered on a silver platter! Thanks for telling me to do it because I personally think it added to the plot. Hope it fulfilled your wants!

Also, thanks to: blackunicorn, Demon Child, allison, ginnyNHarrysecretlove, lizhowHP, Leigh, NightScape, Rain Warrior, madden, Xirleb70, Padfoot98056, baudburner, lilynJamesAAF, EriEka127, BratPrincess-187, SiriuslyObsessed, fantagal, Englishgirl, Romm, Xenocide, jo0609, jouve25, Arctic Wolf2, Maikafuiniel, rhinemjr, and tati1

Author's Note: Whew, it's been a long time since I've updated. (Well long for me anyways.) See, what happened was that I innocently went to check how many reviews I have and saw that I had over 600, fainted and only regained consciousness now. (My buff, topless fanner guys woke me.) OVER 600!!!! Thank you guys so much. I just can't believe this. I mean, wow. 600 just seems so high!! Thank you guys so much. All you reviewers are really responsible for this fic still being here. You really boost my spirits. I do read every single review, and love them all. The chapters may be slowing slightly (though am desperately trying to prevent this) because I've had so many ideas for scenes or ways to improve the fic. I'm frantically writing during my classes and procrastinating homework to try and work on it. Don't be sad though, because this way, the fic will be much better. And I will never get my updates too far apart. Uh yeah, so, on with the chapter!! Hope you all like!!

* * * * *

On his way to the Transfiguration room for his "detention," Harry rounded a corner to find a group of third years standing in a semi-circle against a wall.

He was about to pass when a bit of their conversation caused him to stop.

"Give me back my things right now or you'll be so sorry," came a shaky voice.

"Oh the dirty little snake wants his things back, does he? Well sorry, but nasty little Slys don't get their things back without a little begging."

"What's this? A diary? What are you, a girl?"

"Give that back!"

"If you want it back you'll have to beg. So get down on your knees and bow..."

"What's going on here?" Harry asked as he approached. The circle of kids whipped around. Harry was horrified to see they were young

Gryffindors and Ravenclaws. Backed up against a wall was a slightly trembling boy: a Slytherin first year by the looks of it. The kids surrounding him were holding his book bag and several items from inside it.

“Are you Harry Potter?” one Gryffindor boy asked in awe. The young Slytherin looked as if he had just been sentenced to death. Harry knew what the boy was thinking: that he’d have no help from a prefect from his rival house.

“Yes. Now what is going on?” he asked sternly, in his best authoritative tone.

“Oh you know, just teaching a filthy Slytherin a lesson, knocking him off of his high pedestal,” one explained, as if expecting praise. Instead, Harry was appalled.

“Oh, so you decide to gang up on him, outnumbering him by twelve to one? Corner him against a wall and steal his things, including his wand? Leaving him unarmed? What is that, fair?” he asked furiously.

“But he’s a Slytherin,” one protested feebly.

“So what? You now have the right to attack him? No, not only attack him, but try to force him to bow down to you? You remind me of Voldemort!” The kids all gasped. “That’s right. This behavior is disgusting. If you want to talk about houses, I thought Gryffindors were supposed to be brave. I thought Ravenclaws were supposed to be smart. But you’re all acting spineless and idiotic, and worst of all, prejudice. You’ve all let down your houses and I can only hope that you can make up for your actions. Now put everything back in his book bag.”

The third years all timidly obeyed.

“Good. I think you all owe him an apology, but I won’t make you give one, since I happen to hate insincerity. Merlin, just think about how you were all acting and try and get passed these stupid house rivalries. Now I suggest you all leave before I get Professor Snape to give out punishments.”

The Gryffindors and Ravenclaws scattered, as if running for their lives. The younger Slytherin looked down at the ground. Harry picked the boy's book bag off the ground and handed it to him. The boy took it tentatively, looking up at Harry in confused apprehension.

"Hey, are you okay?" he asked.

The boy nodded, not meeting Harry's eye. Harry knew what the boy was feeling.

"Hey don't be embarrassed. It's them who should feel ashamed for acting like such prats. Can you believe this stupid house rivalry stuff? It's so ridiculous."

The boy smiled at him slightly. "Yeah, it really sucks. So you don't care that I'm in Slytherin?" he asked cautiously.

"Nah, you're all little squirty runts to me," he said with a smile to show he was kidding.

"Hey!" the boy said with a laugh. The boy paused, biting his lip. "Are you really the-Boy-Who-Lived?" he blurted out.

"Well, I'm Harry Potter, but all that Boy-Who-Lived stuff is just garbage. What's your name?"

"Charles Crabbe."

Harry froze. "Do you have an older brother?" he asked.

The boy nodded miserably. "Yeah, Vincent. He doesn't like me very much. He's really big and strong and can beat up people, and I'm just a little wimp. He would kill me if he knew I almost got beat up by Gryffindors. But I'm trying to work out so I can be more like him."

"Hey, I think you're fine the way you are. You don't need to be like your brother," he said with a smile. How strange that the two brothers were so different. He wished the younger boy had chosen a better role model. "Well I have to run off to detention," he said, making a

face that evoked a laugh from the younger boy, “but if those kids bother you anymore, tell a teacher or find me, okay? Also, keep your wand in your pocket where you can grab it easily and disarm anyone. It’s Expelliarmus. That’ll disarm them if you need it.”

“Okay, Expelliarmus.”

“You got it. See you later.” Harry nodded goodbye and began to walk off.

“Err...Harry?” the boy called, as if unsure if he was allowed to use the name.

“Yeah?” he asked, turning back around.

“You know, my brother hates you, but I think he’s wrong,” he said shyly before running off.

Harry blushed and continued his way to the Transfiguration classroom, unaware of the blonde Slytherin who had witnessed the whole scene. Malfoy was still in slight shock at the scene he had witnessed as Harry disappeared around the corner. He shook his head and went off to dinner. He wouldn’t tell his friends about this. This was something he wanted to think about on his own.

“Good evening, Harry,” Dumbledore said brightly as Harry entered the classroom.

“Hello,” he said, nodding back.

“Harry, I’ve heard some impressive rumors about Potions class today,” Remus said with a proud expression. Professor McGonagall looked equally happy.

“Attempting to redeem oneself after nearly blowing up my classroom is not what I would call impressive. I believe ‘showing off’ would be a more accurate term,” Snape sneered. Harry rolled his eyes in response. They had decided to keep their plan a secret from even the other two professors, as neither would be pleased with what Harry was planning to do. As with Ron and Hermione, they couldn’t

have them yelling anything out at the last second to give it away. If the plan worked out, nobody could interfere without risk of giving it away. If Voldemort attacked, it would be their only chance and they couldn't blow it.

"As pleased as I am that you have obviously shown such promise with your magical abilities, you should be careful with letting too many people know about it. We don't want to provoke You-Know-Who into showing up," said Professor McGonagall. Harry nodded despite the fact that this was part of what they were trying to do.

"All right, Harry, today I thought we'd see how well you rely on your senses aside from sight in dueling. It is very possible that you could either lose your glasses or be hit with a blinding spell during a duel," Dumbledore said with a glimmer of excitement in his eyes.

Harry gulped. "A blinding spell?" he asked, the nervousness showing through. He didn't like the idea with being completely without sight.

"Don't worry, most aren't permanent," Lupin said kindly. Harry nodded with a weak smile, trying not to think about the permanent ones.

"Since even temporary blinding spells have the potential to damage eyesight, we're going to do this the old fashioned way," Dumbledore said holding up a blindfold.

He motioned Harry to come over and turn around. The headmaster tied the black piece of cloth securely over Harry's eyes.

"I feel like I'm at a little kid's birthday and it's my turn to hit the piñata," he said with a laugh. Dumbledore chuckled while the other three professors looked confused.

"Colorful cardboard animals filled with Muggle candy. I always say that we don't give Muggles enough credit," Dumbledore said almost dreamily. Harry laughed thinking of the old wizard's obsession with Muggle candy.

"You can discuss strange Muggle traditions with Potter later, Albus. Let's get on with this," Snape said impatiently.

"Of course, Severus. Come along, Harry," Dumbledore said amusedly.

Harry started forward toward the middle of the room where they would be dueling. His foot caught the leg of a desk and he crashed to the floor. The room erupted with the professors' laughter. Harry couldn't help but laugh as well.

"Well let's just hope I can duel without sight better than I can walk without it," the young Gryffindor murmured with a blush.

He now felt extremely disoriented. He had thought the desk was behind him, not at his side. He got to his feet and stuck his hands out, feeling around until he found the desk at his side. He cautiously took a step forward and ran into someone.

"Er, sorry," he said.

"It's fine, Harry," Lupin chuckled.

"Er...where exactly am I going?" Harry asked sheepishly.

"This way," Lupin said kindly. He felt a hand gently take hold of his elbow and lead him to the center of the room.

Harry quickly tried to sense where each of the professors were and quickly felt their presence. Dumbledore was easy to recognize because of his great levels of magical power. Snape could be recognized by the dark tinge to his magic that still lingered from his days as a Death Eater and the mark that was still burned into his arm. Lupin was recognizable because of his mark as a werewolf, and McGonagall's animagus abilities made her stand out.

He could tell Lupin would be the first to fire and, in sensing that it wasn't an Unforgivable, whipped around and blocked it. He felt Dumbledore shooting a curse at him from his side and jumped out of

the way while putting up a Reflection charm at his side to reflect Lupin's curse back at him.

However, once the professors began moving around, he lost track of them without being able to see them. He tried to sense them again, but was distracted by the curses flying at him. Without being able to sense the castors of the spells, it was more difficult to determine what type of spell they were. He began to just try to dodge them, but could hardly even tell where they were coming from.

Harry stepped back to dodge a curse, stepping right into a Tripping Curse. His feet were ripped out from under him, and next thing he knew he was on his back on the ground. He had dropped his wand, but could sense a curse coming directly for him.

There was no time to roll out of the way so he just threw his hands in front of his face out of instinct.

Nothing happened. He could feel dark magical energy but wasn't feeling any effects of a curse. He heard a collective gasp.

"That's impossible," he heard Professor McGonagall mutter.

"What's going on?" Harry asked, unable to see anything other than darkness. He began to put his arms down to help himself get up.

"Harry, don't move!" Dumbledore instructed. Harry began to panic slightly.

"Why? What's happening?"

"I'm going to untie your blindfold, but don't move, all right?" Lupin's voice came right near Harry's head. The Defense professor untied the knot behind Harry's head and lifted the piece of black cloth. Harry's eyes widened at the sight in front of him.

A jet of light was hovering a mere six inches away from Harry's hands, just like the exploding potion earlier that day. It looked like it was

being pushed back by something, but could be released at any moment.

"Is that..." he began.

"The Cruciatus Curse," Snape finished, looking astonished.

"But I thought you couldn't block Unforgivables," Harry said in a near whisper as if he talked any louder, the spell would be provoked into attacking.

"You can't," said Lupin, staring at the frozen jet of light in awe.

"And I've never seen or heard of anyone freezing a spell like you have," Dumbledore added.

"What do I do?" Harry asked, trying not to sound nervous. It was one thing to just be hit by a curse, but another thing to have an extremely painful one hovering right above your face and not knowing what was holding it back.

"Try slowly moving out of the way," Snape instructed, sounding slightly unsure.

Harry slowly tried inching his body to the side, but suddenly, the jet of light shot toward him and stopped only three inches from his hands. Harry froze and tensed up.

"I don't think that's working," he gulped.

"You don't say, Potter," Snape said sarcastically.

Dumbledore stepped forward cautiously. "Harry, try to make it move with your mind. Use your wandless magic."

"Professor, I can use wandless magic to levitate small things and such, not to move frozen curses."

"Well, you used it to freeze the curse in the first place. Just trust yourself. Concentrate on moving it," Dumbledore instructed.

Harry took a deep breath to calm his nerves and nodded. "Okay." He closed his eyes and concentrated with all his might on moving the beam of light away from him.

Slowly, and with an extreme amount of effort, he felt the magical energy of the spell moving slowly away from him. He cautiously opened his eyes to find that the jet of light had backed up significantly.

"I don't think I can hold it much longer," he gasped, feeling practically depleted of energy.

Before anyone could give him advice, Harry felt the curse slipping from his control. He quickly rolled to the side, the curse barely missing him as it struck the spot where he had just been lying.

Harry could barely move, feeling incredibly shaky and tired. He felt someone rolling him onto his back. He opened his eyes wearily to see a worried Snape looking down at him. He had déjà vu, remembering Snape's worried gaze when he had been stabbed.

Snape hooked his arms under Harry's and lifted the boy into sitting position. Lupin knelt in front of Harry and put a small piece of chocolate into the young Gryffindor's mouth.

"Come on Harry. Just eat that. That's right," the werewolf said with a comforting smile.

Harry did as told and immediately felt better. Lupin gave him more chocolate until Harry had regained most of his energy. Snape helped him to his feet. The other adults looked at the Potions master in amusement. Snape scowled at them.

"None of you say a word," he threatened.

"Twenty points to Gryffindor for showing me two things I've never seen before in my long life," Dumbledore said merrily. "That was quite a bit of magic there. We'll have to experiment with that at our next lesson along with working on dueling without sight."

“What’s the second thing?” Harry asked curiously.

The headmaster just looked amusedly from him to Snape.

Professor McGonagall ruffled Harry’s hair fondly. “I think you’ve managed to soften up our Potions master. That is more incredible than any bit of wandless magic you can pull off,” she said warmly. Snape shot her a death glare, which made her smile even wider.

Harry groaned. “Oh great, now he’s going to be extra mean to me to prove you wrong,” he muttered. Snape scowled as the other professors laughed, knowing it was true.

“I do not need to prove myself to anyone, Mr. Potter. Ten points from Gryffindor for your accusation,” Snape sneered, but only made the other professors laugh harder.

“Ten points to Gryffindor for the precise observation,” McGonagall said joyfully.

Harry saw Snape open his mouth to retort. “I better go. I’m late for dinner,” he said grabbing his things before the two heads of houses could start a point war.

“Good idea, Harry. Escape while you can,” Lupin said with a laugh.

“That was amazing work today, Harry. You should be proud,” Dumbledore said fondly.

“Get a good night’s rest,” Professor McGonagall instructed.

Harry nodded and made his way out of the room. He quickly made his way down the passageways, toward the Great Hall. He rounded a corner and stopped.

Cho Chang was standing there blocking his way.

“Hey Harry,” Cho said in a flirty tone.

"I'm late for dinner, Cho," he said in an exasperated tone and tried to move past her but she blocked his way in the narrow hallway. He didn't really want to go and try to get past her since he wasn't sure if she'd try sticking her tongue down his throat again. He sighed and rolled his eyes. "What, Cho?"

"I heard about what you did in your potions class. I'm very impressed," she said, batting her eyelashes and cocking her head to the side.

"Well as long as it pleases you," he said sarcastically.

"Why don't you like me, Harry?" she asked innocently.

Harry sighed in annoyance.

"Because you're a liar, you only think of yourself, and you treat everyone else like they're beneath you."

"You're not beneath me."

"Neither are the people you treat like scum. Listen, just give this up. I'm not going to date you especially after what you did to me in Hogsmeade."

"Harry, darling, don't you understand? We could make headlines together. Hell, we already have."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Oh wow. Everything I want in a girlfriend: someone to use me to get famous," he said sarcastically. "Cho, I don't like you and won't be your boyfriend. Just let me through. My friends are expecting me." He took a step forward, but instead of letting him past, she stepped forward as well.

"Were you responsible for that little prank at dinner last week?" she asked, suddenly looking threatening.

"No, but I think you deserved it after what you did to me," he said crossing his arms.

"You and I will be together, whether you like it or not," she threatened, eyes narrowing.

"Oh that makes a lot of sense," he said sarcastically. "Now let me by."

Instead she whipped out her wand. "Confundus!" she hissed, and the spell hit an unsuspecting and unprepared Harry. Suddenly, nothing made sense. The world seemed to spin around him and the ground began to rock. Where was he? He heard the words, "I wish you'd stop this playing hard to get routine, Harry. You're making things difficult."

"Who?" he managed to get out, but somebody shushed him. Somebody grabbed his hand and was leading him somewhere. It was the only thing that seemed to be staying still and he hung onto it, allowing himself to be pulled along, feeling as if he were floating rather than walking. He grasped his head with one of his hands, trying to make the buzzing nonsense to straighten itself out.

He felt his back being pressed against something solid, but he couldn't figure out if he was standing up or lying down. He pressed one of his palms up against the hard, flat surface to make sure it was still there, while his other hand grasped his head.

"All right, so make sure you get some shots of us kissing. Make sure his scar is visible and same with my face. We need to make sure everyone knows who we are," a voice said. Harry wasn't sure who it was talking to. "Harry?" it whispered.

Harry looked around. There was a shape in front of him, but it seemed to keep moving around and he wasn't sure if it was real. "Hmm?" he murmured.

"I told you I'd have my way," the mysterious voice said. What did it mean? He couldn't remember what it was supposed to mean, and just thinking about it was hurting his head. He felt something moving up his chest.

“Stop,” he moaned, pushing at the things climbing around his chest. Was it a snake?

“Don’t fight it, Harry,” the voice whispered and one of the things on his chest slithered its way up around to the back of his neck. Something soft pressed up against his mouth, making it harder to breathe. He heard a clicking sound in the background and there was a flashing light coming from somewhere. He weakly attempted to shove the thing away but he was having trouble even working his limbs. He turned his head away.

“No, go away,” he mumbled. The thing turned his head back and the soft thing was back on his mouth again. He vaguely felt his wrists being pinned back against the solid surface to keep him from pushing the thing away. He didn’t have the strength to pull them away.

“Cho,” the other voice came, “he looks miserable. These pictures will look like shit in the Daily Prophet.” There was a pause and then a gasp. “Ooh, I have an idea. Get him to say something to you and the picture will show his lips saying it and everyone will fuss over lip-reading him. Ooh, that’ll be fun. Make him say something!”

“Tell me you want me,” the voice demanded.

“Huh?” he asked. He didn’t understand why he was being asked to do something so silly sounding.

“Say it,” it ordered, the thing descended on his mouth again, suffocating him for what seemed like an eternity before it broke away.

“Stop it,” he murmured weakly. Nothing was making sense but he didn’t like the way the voice was ordering him about. Wasn’t there a reason he didn’t like this voice?

“Say it!” The voice was getting angry sounding and his wrists were pinned harder against the surface. He just closed his eyes tightly to try to put his thoughts in order without the distracting confusion around him. The thing covered his mouth again.

“Harry?!” a different voice asked. The thing abruptly lifted off his lips and he could breathe better and his hands came free. He grasped his head again as all the confusion was giving him a headache. The voice sounded familiar. He liked this one more.

“Who...” he trailed off not remembering what he was going to ask

“Go away Granger, this is none of your business,” hissed the first voice. She said Granger. He knew that name; it was Hermione’s. Was she here?

“Mione?” he groaned weakly.

“What did you do to him? Let him go! And you, give me that camera!”

“Get out of here you little Mudblood! Don’t stick your nose where it doesn’t belong.”

“Petrificus Totalus!” the nice voice shouted twice. There were two thuds. Then the voice was right near him, maybe even right in front of him. It sounded worried. “Harry?”

“Hmm?” he murmured.

“What’s the matter? What did she do to you? Did she cast a spell on you?”

Harry’s eyebrows knitted. He remembered something about a spell. In the hallway! But that didn’t make sense, or did it? He nodded his head cautiously, unsure if it really did happen.

“Do you know what it was?” the voice asked gently.

Harry shook his head.

“Are you really dizzy?” He nodded. “Is everything really confusing?”

“Yes,” he moaned. Everything WAS confusing. He wished everything: his vision, his thoughts, would stop spinning and rocking.

"All right, I think she cast the Confundus Curse on you. I'm going to perform the counter curse, okay?" Harry nodded. He wasn't sure what the voice was talking about, but he trusted the voice.

"Lucidius!"

Harry blinked. Everything fell back into place. He was standing against a wall in the girl's bathroom. Cho was lying in a body-bind on the floor, a scowl frozen on her face, alongside her friend who had a camera in her hand. Hermione stood in front of him looking worried.

"Are you all right, Harry?" she asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Thanks Hermione. What happened?"

"Well, I came in here and she," she pointed accusingly at Cho, "had your arms pinned to the wall telling shouting 'Say it!' You looked really out of it and then she was kissing you. Her friend was taking pictures."

"She got me in the hallway before dinner. I didn't think she'd curse me though," he said, casting a glare at Cho while indignantly picking up his tie off the ground. He couldn't remember having it taken off.

"We should tell Dumbledore or McGonagall. Who knows what she would have done to you if I hadn't come along!"

"No, 'Mione, not this time. I'm fine and I just don't want to deal with it," he said to Hermione. He pried the camera out of Cho's friend's hand and removed the film, destroying it as it hit the light. He then stepped over to Cho, positioning himself so she could see him. "But I'm warning you Cho, leave me alone. If you ever do anything like that again, I won't hesitate to tell the headmaster, and I doubt he will be very pleased. I'm going to unfreeze you now, but remember what I said or I'll get you chucked out of Hogwarts."

"Don't unfreeze them, Harry," Hermione said coldly. "You should just leave them lying here until someone finds them."

“As appealing as that sounds, ‘Mione, I don’t want to deal with the aftermath of that.” He quickly performed the countercurse and they sat up scowling.

“Bitch,” Cho sneered at Hermione.

“Don’t insult my friend,” Harry warned.

She got to her feet in a huff and brushed off her robes. She stuck her nose in the air and pushed passed Hermione toward the door, her friend scrambling after her, snatching the empty camera out of Harry’s hands.

“You’re making a big mistake Harry,” Cho called before angrily marching out the door.

“I really doubt that,” he murmured, re-tying his tie. “I’ll wait for you outside, ‘Mione.”

He waited a few minutes outside the girls’ lavatory, leaning against the wall re-buttoning his cuffs which seemed to have been undone as well. Hermione soon emerged and they walked together down to the Great Hall, joking about Harry needing bodyguards to fend off all the girls that were after him.

A/N: Well, hope you all liked that. I just had to add a quick note from my real life. My Halloween costume!! Three of my HP obsessed friends and I are being the four houses of Hogwarts!! Today, I made my wand by carving up and panting a fallen bit of a small branch. It’s so awesome. I can’t stop playing with it! Today, it’s been a drumstick, a baseball bat, and a wand for helping me with my scenes. (Many of my scenes, I have to act out parts to see how to describe it or how it would happen or what the reaction would be. See if it seems natural or not.) My sister, with my idea, is being a house elf!! We got a pillowcase and cut arms and head holes and are tying a small rope around the waste. We’re getting her funny toe socks, rubbing dirt into her clothes and smudging it on her face, then sticking band aids on her face and wrapping her hands in gauze! Feel free to use these

ideas!! They're fun! I just sewed my scarf today. (I'm Gryffindor, though I wanted to be Slytherin. I lost at rock paper scissors.)

Oh and those who want to check out my sister's story. Go to and go to search and type in Torrlev under author's name. She has two stories, my fav is Reminiscense. They're not HP, they're original fiction. But they're awesome. You should definitely read them.

* * * * *

Eowyn of Ithilien: YAY!! You're back! I thought you had stopped reading and was so upset. I honestly went to my sister pouting and was moaning, "I think one of my favorite reviewers has abandoned my story!" Now you're back and I couldn't be more happy. Ron anger is always fun. I'm glad you liked the argument. LOL drool. Harry...a male prostitute? HAHAHAHA!! Only in my dreams. I am rather fond of that part too! I just love making Snape act all human and having him want to remain a cold hearted bastard. He can try but he can't!! Hahaha!! High oracles. Curious indeed. Really? I don't really remember Roger Davies in the books. He goes to the ball with Fleur, but he's just swept up by the Veela charm perhaps? Perhaps not. Maybe he's around so many shallow girls, and now he was forced to dance with Eloise and is finally seeing that there are better girls than the shallow ones. That looks aren't everything. Yes, I like that explanation, let's go with it. If you ever want to watch a funny, slightly (okay extremely) perverted Indian musical type thing, you should rent the Guru. Hahaha funny stuff man. I was running around singing "Acha acha acha acha aaaaaaah!" and then making up Indian words in the general tune of songs in the movie. Well, I'm glad you're back. Hope you liked the chapter!!

Dadaiiro: I'm glad you liked last chapter. Hmm...that's a good question. I'm going to say that Fred and George don't know about the Marauders because I love your suggestion so much. I'll have to see if I can work that in!! June's almost here in the story. In just a few chapters, as a matter of fact! We're just going to assume that all the good little Death Eater children are going to go tell mum and dad about what HP did today in school. Harry can't practice the spell he's supposed to do or he'd kill himself! It makes the cancer rapidly take over a person's body!! He's just going to have to hope that it'll work

and we'll have to hope that it doesn't. Thank you so much for wanting to check out my sister's fic. It's at . Her story is Reminiscence and her penname is Torrlev. I hope you do read and review it. I love it and I know she doesn't get nearly enough reviews.

Terence: Thank you dahling. I was laughing so hard about the Sirius being handsome thing. Oh I bet that is one bodacious egg!!

Luinlothana: I'm glad you liked the Harry/Remus/Sirius scene. I think both the adults really got wrapped up in their memories. Plus, neither of them are used to having kids. Sirius has been either in prison or on the run for the past 15 or so years! No kids there. But he's trying and he cares, he's just in the training process. LOL. I would love to see Snape yelling at Cho and having her cower under his sneer. Woo hoo for Sev!! We'll see.

SubliminalMsgs: I know. Cho's such a gross girlie girl. Who would take poor Harry to such a sadistic place as Madam Pudifoot's? Only a cruel cold-hearted biotch like Cho!! I think some people think I'm being to rough on her. I don't think they understand the true horror of her. Lol. I'm a senior in highschool, so school life is definitely hectic. In fact, I'm procrastinating homework right now! Oops!

Catiechan: Oh dahling, you are oh so welcome. Thank you for insisting to put it in. At first, I was just doing it for you and then when I began to write it, I realized how important it was to the fic and couldn't figure out why I'd ignore such an important scene opportunity in the first place! Don't worry, Siri has not made a disappearing act, let me assure you that.

Trapper's Girl: I know what you're talking about. Driving stick is definitely a pain. Yay I'm so happy you liked the Sirius/Harry part. I want Sirius as a pet!! Ever since the third book, I occasionally look at my dog suspiciously and wonder. Hey, you never know! It happened to Ron!!

Dra: Lol!! I love you and you want to know why? Everyone is saying, 'Well, Celebony, don't put your school work in jeopardy just for fanfiction,' but you say to hell with all that and to give you more story.

The suggestion is far too tempting to ignore. You remind me of your penname(Draco): Cunning, manipulative, and oh so wonderful!!

Paranoiain2005: Honey, if Fred and George fell off into nowhere-land, I'd be mad at myself. Harry was supposed to overdo the potions accident to make sure he showed off his powers. He had to grab the attention of all the lovely Death Eaters in training. I LOVE long rambling reviews. They rock my world!! I live off them!! Okay, thanks!! If I need help, I'll definitely ask you. This may come in handy when writing my scenes. If I need any advice, I'll email you, how does that sound? Thanks for the offer!

PussyKat: I'm glad you liked the Sirius/Harry, interaction. Snape is always really cool. My sis's fic is at . Look in my after-story A/N for details. It would be so great if you could read and review it! She doesn't get nearly enough credit for her wonderful fic.

Myr Halcyon: Thank you. Thank you very much. Yeah, Harry may not be the best actor with the staged stuff, but it was supposed to be over the top to make sure it grabbed some attention. I'm so happy you like what I'm doing with Eloise. I figured she needed some recognition.

Theauthorthatwrites: This story is sort of H/G. You can definitely see the undertones, but they won't be dating or anything. There just isn't enough time for that to develop. But I do enjoy having the hints there. I'm not sure what you mean by overextending chapters. Please explain.

Maximum Poofy-Pissed Off Queen: Thank you. Yes, poor everyone if Harry dies. That could be very sad. :(You gotta love angst though!!

Jouve 25: Yup, Harry's discovering new powers all the time. You're definitely onto something. As the cancer becomes stronger, it's messing with his magic more, causing it to grow, but he can only really use it to its full ability on "good days" when he's not feeling like utter crap.

Blackenedsoul: Um...6:45 in the morning just sounds like hell. Thank you. My little puppets...hmm...I Love It!!

o Hell o Kitty o: The potions were red because Snape switched the ingredients in the instructions to make it explosive! Hope you liked the chapter!

SiriusWolf: I'm glad you're dishing out your ideas! I like hearing them, although I have the end already finished. But I like hearing yours. If you write a Harry gets cancer fic, you must tell me. I will definitely have to read it!! Aah, you will see about the curse. All in good time, or bad time, depending on how much I decide to torture young Harry here. I hope you like this chapter better than the last.

Fantagal: *takes a deep bow* Thank you. Yes, nearly blowing up Snape's classroom is a daring feat and I must take all credit for it. (Unless Snape comes and then I'm blaming it on Cho)

LilynJamesAAF: You'll have to see! My sister bows deeply and says you're very welcome miss. She's practicing. She's going to be a house elf for Halloween!! We've decided on a brilliant costume with a big pillow case, funny socks and lots of Band-Aids!!

CristinaLupin01442: Don't be sorry you cried. Be happy! Because it makes me happy!! Moony's daughter would only be the coolest title to have ever!! I love Moony, I want to hug him!!

Shawn Pickett: Lol, so I'm taking it you really like Cho then. Hahaha (that was sarcastic btw) Yeah, Cho's a bitch, but I don't know if she'd exactly deserve that. Plus, it would make readers feel sorry for her, and that cannot happen if it's in my control! I'll think of something though. I like the Dursley idea. LOL. They may be scared of wizards now, though, after Snape gave them permanent donkey ears and tails.

Black Cobra: I' so glad you like my fic. Dakota's a scary thing for me b/c I don't want her to become a Mary-Sue. I'm glad you like her! I LOVE Fred and George. They ARE like big brothers (except for the fact that I want to marry one of them!)

Lindiel Eryn: Thanks for the idea. I already have the ending written, so you'll just have to wait and see what's going to happen!! Good, bad, happy or sad. Tralalalala!

Maikafuiniel: Snape didn't really give him detention! He just gave him a cover for that night's training. LOL. *Harry magically stops fire and cures everyone* "Uh....wandless magic? Er...no way. Not me. I'm just all regular and all," Harry says before running away. No, they don't want it to be a covert thing. They need Voldie to know about it so he'll use the spell. I'm in the same grade as you and trust me, I know, homework's a total pain.

Shiozaki: YAY! I love making readers cry (In the most non-sadistic way possible) I love "damn you. (In a good way!)" Hahahaha that sounds like something I'd say. Um...I can't assure you on anything, but keep reading and you'll see!

Snape-Slytherinking: Love the username. Well we'll have to wait and see, but "peaceful"....I'm thinking a definite no.

NightScape: Lol! A servant monkey. Well-written? Thank you!

Siri Kat: Hoorah!! I'm so glad you find this fic tear-inducing. Thank you for the compliment. And R/H forever!! They're just soooo perfect together!!

Tir-Synni: Well I'm glad I've hooked you. That's definitely a fear of mine: that people will read the first chapter and think 'oh, a Mary-Sue and the cliché child abuse thing, forget it!' Thanks for giving it a chance and I'm glad you're enjoying it!

Charmed 1: Thank you! I'm so happy you like it!!

Tati: I'm glad you found it too! Hope you continue to like it!!

Also thanks to: NatsukoMidori, Leigh (One of your favs? Thank you!), Erikalya Arvanesse, EriEda127, Sailor-Knight Shadowstar, BratPrincess-187, ginnynharrysecretlove, Miss Shaow Prowl (LOL), ratgirl, Victoria, Romm, Arctic Wolf2, kathfire (Yay! Hope you cont. to

enjoy!), Rain Warrior (Lol, counting the seconds? Awesome!), and rhinmjr.

Author's Note: Okay, I know I deserve punishment. It's been over a week since my last update. Strap me in a chair and stick me in a room with a whiny Cho while under a Tickling Curse (it may be a charm, but I think it sounds more like a curse). I've just been so incredibly swamped with school and such! I've developed this eye twitch that has been popping up every half an hour since Monday. I think I need a holiday. Plus, I've been rapidly adding in scenes that I've dreamed up to make the fic better. Anyways, enough of my complaining, time for a dedication!! This chapter is dedicated to you, Disassembly of Reason for all the incredibly awesome reviews! I love reading them since they are so long and insightful and they point out particular things that are good or might be a mistake. I love them and can't believe how much you've picked up on. I put little things in that I'm never sure if anyone's picked up on, but I'm glad you seem to. Also, a special thanks to Terence. Girl, you've kept me from losing my mind especially in this past week or so. Thanks for your emails for without them, I would be right alongside Lockhart in St. Mungo's psycho ward.

The next day, Harry wasn't feeling very well. He suspected that he had overdone it with his magic the day before and was now paying the consequences. When they were walking to potions, Harry had to stop and grab Ron's arm at one point when he thought he would collapse. Ron and Hermione stopped and looked at him worriedly as Ron steadied him.

"Hey, mate, you okay?" he asked quietly.

Harry nodded. "Yeah, I'm fine, just a little dizzy. Give me just a second," he said quietly. Hermione and Ron exchanged a worried look when they were sure Harry couldn't see.

"Oy, Potty, are you and the Weasel a couple now? I can understand wanting to do better than a Mudblood, Weasley, but Potter? That's just pathetic," came a familiar drawling voice.

Harry looked up wearily to see Malfoy with his gang observing them with a smug look on his face. He had noticed a drastic decline in the

derogatory comments ever since he had saved Malfoy from falling in the Quidditch game. Now, however, the blonde was with his posse and couldn't bypass the opportunity to torture the Gryffindors.

Harry immediately let go of Ron's arm, trying not to sway.

"Shove off, ferret face," Ron snapped. "Go gel your hair or whatever it is you spoiled brats waste your time doing."

Malfoy decided to ignore Ron's comment and raised an eyebrow at Harry, who was trying and failing to stop his slight shivering. Harry knew he must've looked awful, but tried to appear as if he was fine. Unfortunately, Malfoy noticed.

"What's wrong with you, Potter. You look like you're dying. Can't get my hopes up though, now can I?" Malfoy drawled evoking sniggers from his followers.

Ron stilled, his face losing all color as a look of pure rage crossed over his features.

Harry grabbed his arm weakly. "Ron, it's fine. Leave it. It's not worth getting into trouble..."

His words were lost as Hermione walked up to Malfoy, twisted her arm back and punched him full force in the face, causing the Slythering to stumble back. Her eyes glinted with fury. Malfoy put a hand to his face; his jaw dropped in shock. He looked back at her in shock, blood streaking down from his nose. Hermione stuck her index finger right up in his face.

"Don't you EVER say something like that again, you bastard! EVER! Do you understand me?" she screamed hysterically.

Crabbe and Goyle stepped toward her, fists raised, but Malfoy raised a hand to stop them. "You don't hit girls," he said as if horrified they had even thought about it. "We are civilized unlike some people who resort to barbaric ways." He then turned to Hermione who was still glaring at him. "Gutsy, Granger," he said quietly. "Just remember, there are other forms of revenge that are worse than a simple punch.

I'd watch my back if I were you," he said ominously before stalking down the hall angrily, his posse following him. Pansy Parkinson raced after him waving a handkerchief yelling for him to let her take care of him.

Ron and Harry looked at Hermione in disbelief. She was massaging her fist.

"I don't understand why people always use their fists to fight. It's a lot less painful to just cast a spell and the effects can be more creative," she said calmly.

"Mione, that was brilliant," Ron said in awe. "You are my hero."

"Yeah, 'Mione. Thanks. I mean, wow, you kicked his ass!" Harry said in wonder.

Hermione blushed slightly. "Well I really shouldn't have resorted to violence. How will you boys ever take me seriously again when I tell you not to do it?" she said, trying not to let her cheerfulness show, but failing.

"That is definitely a moment I want to freeze in my mind forever," Ron said blissfully. "The look on Malfoy's face was priceless." He turned to some students that were walking by. "That's my girlfriend!" he said excitedly. He picked her up and twirled her around. She screamed and told him to put her down before she cursed him, causing Harry to burst out laughing.

"Remind me never to ask you for romance advice," Harry sniggered. Ron made a face at him.

"Well, Harry, at least I have a girlfriend," Ron teased, throwing her arm around an indignant-looking Hermione, who didn't like Ron referring to her as his girlfriend in front of her. She said it made her sound like an object, though neither of the boys really understood it.

"Well I have a stalker, beat that!" Harry said.

"Ooh a stalker, how romantic, Har," Ron said with a roll of the eyes.

"He does have a few fan clubs as well, Ron," Hermione reminded him with an innocent smirk of revenge. "Girls worship him without him even having to say hello."

Ron opened his mouth but couldn't think of a retort.

"Ha!" Harry said triumphantly. Then a thoughtful look crossed his face. "Actually, that's quite disturbing," he said as an afterthought.

"Don't worry, we can just set 'Mione on them if they get out of control!" Ron said excitedly.

Hermione rolled her eyes.

"Come on you two warmongers, we're going to be late to class if we don't hurry," she said, attempting to suppress a smile. She led the way, while Ron kept a watchful eye on Harry as discretely as possible.

As they reached the potions classroom door, Ron had to grab Harry's elbow to steady him. Harry gave him a thankful smile.

"Harry, maybe you should skip class today," Hermione said worriedly.

"No, I'm fine. Besides, I'm already getting behind in class from skipping too many days. I'll be fine," he said determinedly, walking through the classroom door. Hermione and Ron exchanged a look before following him. As Harry had been getting progressively weaker and more ill, everyone had tried to encourage him to take it easy, but the Gryffindor seemed adamant on not falling behind in his schoolwork. His two best friends couldn't understand why it mattered so much, for obvious reasons, but didn't dare bring up the question with Harry, since Harry's death was an untouchable subject among them. Hermione thought it may be because Harry needed to feel as if he was still in control of something and had chosen his grades for that need, while Ron argued that Harry just hadn't given up hope yet.

The three sat down as Snape stalked in, robes billowing in their usual threatening way. He quickly explained the potion they were making that day and snapped at them to get to work. Ron paired up with

Neville so that Hermione could pair up with Harry to help him in case he began to get worse. It was an unspoken agreement between Harry's three friends that he was quickly catching on to, but didn't bother arguing with.

As the period went on, Harry began to wish that he had followed his friends' advice, as he was feeling extremely fatigued and shaky.

"Harry, can you hand me my manticores saliva?" Hermione asked as she stirred in a pinch of crushed dragon claw. Harry grabbed the vial and held it out to her, but his hand was trembling so much that it slipped from his grasp and shattered upon hitting the table. The potion hissed as it formed a puddle on the table.

"Oh Merlin, 'Mione, I'm so sorry. I—I'll pay for it. We can use mine..." he apologized as he grabbed a rag and began rapidly wiping it up.

Hermione put a hand over his trembling ones.

"Harry. Harry, it's okay," she whispered. Harry looked up and met her worried eyes. "I think you should go to the..."

She was cut off when the pair heard a plop in their cauldron. Harry whipped his head up and saw Malfoy looking at them with a smug smirk on his face that simply sang revenge.

"'Mione!" Harry gasped as their potion began to steam. They both threw their potions books in front of their faces in the nick of time.

The explosion was small, but it was obvious their potion was ruined. The few splatters on their books were eating holes through the covers. Hermione glared daggers at the blond Slytherin, but Harry couldn't manage such a scathing look. Instead, he tried to discretely grab the table for support as his legs began to be more and more unwilling to support his body.

"Hey, Har, you all right?" Ron asked worriedly.

Before he had a chance to answer, somebody grabbed his upper arm. Harry looked up to see an angry-looking Snape.

“Potter! Granger! I’ve had enough of your foolish horseplay. Into my office, now!” he yelled, dragging Harry toward his office door, Hermione scrambling after them. If Harry didn’t know any better, he would have said that Snape was actually helping him walk, but was sure that the professor didn’t realize that his grip on Harry’s arm was the only thing keeping him from collapsing.

Snape threw open the door and let Hermione get through before following with Harry and slamming the door.

Behind the closed door, the potion master’s expression immediately softened to an impassive look that may have contained the slightest hint of concern. He helped Harry over to the same couch Harry had laid on before with shards of glass protruding from his back. He put the back of his hand to Harry’s forehead, wordlessly got up and retrieved a Fever-Reducing Potion. He poured a bit into a cup, and in taking in Harry’s trembling hands, handed it to Hermione.

“I can do it myself,” Harry said indignantly, reaching for the cup, but Hermione gently pushed his shaky hand away.

“Harry, please. Just let me. Remember the vial in potions just now?”

Harry sighed as Hermione held the cup to his lips. He sipped it down, wincing at the bitter taste.

“Since you’ve been taking this potion so often, Potter, I’m afraid that it will take longer to feel its effects. You two may both remain in here for the remainder of class. I will have Weasley and Longbottom clean up the mess.”

“But Professor, it was Malfoy who...” Hermione protested. Snape held up a hand to stop her.

“Miss Granger, I am aware of what goes on in my classroom. I’ll be forced to take fifteen points from Gryffindor,” he said apathetically as

he put a scowl back on his face and stalked back into his classroom, slamming the door behind him.

"Humph. I can't believe he doesn't see what Malfoy does," Hermione sighed as she sat down beside Harry.

"Of course he sees it. That's what he just said," Harry said sleepily.

"But then why..."

"He's a spy, remember? He has to kiss up to Death Eater children to keep Voldemort from getting suspicious, and Malfoy is one of them."

"It's not fair."

"Course it's not, but then again, what is?" Harry said with a sad smile.

There was a long pause before Hermione buried her face in her hands and began to cry.

"Hermione, I'm sorry, I didn't mean..." Harry started frantically, kicking himself for being so stupid.

She quickly wiped her tears and hugged Harry. "I know. But you're right. It isn't fair. It shouldn't be you." Feeling Harry shivering slightly, she remembered his fever. She pulled away and instructed Harry to lie down, using her thighs as a pillow.

After a brief battle with Harry claiming that he wasn't tired, Hermione one as usual. She took off her cloak and draped it over her friend like a blanket. Harry murmured his thanks. She stroked his hair like her mother used to after nightmares.

"I could get used to this. I feel like a lap dog," Harry mumbled. Both laughed.

"I've done this to Ron a few times in the common room and he's always dead asleep in less than a minute," Hermione said with a smile.

“Then I definitely think he’s got the better deal in this friendship,” Harry teased, eyes resting closed. Hermione laughed quietly.

“Well, too bad for you I have a thing for red heads,” she smirked.

“Mmm...I know how that is,” he mumbled.

Hermione’s hand froze. “Harry, do you mean Ginny?” she whispered excitedly.

Harry groaned with a blush and pulled Hermione’s cloak over his head.

She laughed and yanked it back down. Harry looked up at her with a guilty expression.

“Don’t tell Ron. He’d curse me and throw me in a vat of Bubotuber Pus.”

Hermione laughed. “Are you kidding? Who would he approve of more to date his little sister? He already told me at the dance that he thinks you two would be a great couple.”

“Really?” Harry asked in surprise.

“Really!”

Harry’s smile turned into a sad one. He sighed. “It doesn’t matter though.”

“What doesn’t matter?”

“All of it. I couldn’t—I couldn’t do that to her,” he murmured, turning his eyes away.

Hermione pushed back tears as she remembered that June was starting in only a few days.

There was another long silence.

"Harry, are you scared?" she whispered, unsure if he was even awake.

"A little," he whispered, opening his eyes, but not looking at hers, "but it won't be so bad I think. Everybody does it at some point right? Dumbledore says it's the next great adventure. That doesn't sound so bad, right? He says it's like going to bed after a very long day..." he trailed off, remembering the conversation they had had at the end of his first year. His breathing soon evened out and Hermione knew he was asleep. Only then did she let her tears come again.

After class, Ron was let into Snape's office to find Harry asleep with his head on Hermione's lap, with her absentmindedly stroking his hair. She looked up and caught his eye, giving him a sad smile.

"How's he doing?" Ron asked quietly.

"Well, Snape gave him a Fever-Reducing Potion, so hopefully he won't feel as sick. He just seems pretty exhausted."

"He's always exhausted," Ron said, unsure of why they always seemed to state the obvious.

Snape stalked in, straight to his potions supply. He selected a few potions and then turned to Ron.

"Weasley, can I trust you to be competent enough to follow some simple instructions? Potter can't be trekking to the Hospital Wing every time he feels sick, especially now that he's not as strong. Since you're sharing a dorm with Potter, it will be easier to trust this with you, but if your intelligence is truly as dismal as what you demonstrate in my classroom..."

"I can do it sir," Ron said in annoyance.

Snape set out a few potions bottles. "This is a Dreamless Sleep Potion. Potter's used it enough to know how much to take, but in case you need to know for some reason, he should take this if he's in excessive pain at night and can't sleep. Just fill this vial halfway and

that should do. Don't let him use this two often, or it will begin to have negative side effects. You got that Weasley?"

Ron nodded, having never concentrated on learning potions more in his life.

"This bluish one is the Fever-Reducing one, but make sure he doesn't take that one more than once a day and no more than half a cupful. If it more serious than just a fever, though, get Madam Pomfrey to check on him instead of giving him the potion. The yellowish one will give him a bit of an energy boost if he needs one, but no more than a spoonful a day. This is the one I'm trusting you to regulate, as I suspect that Potter may try to take more as the fatigue sets in even more." Ron nodded. "Give him a cup of the green one if he doesn't eat during the day. If he can't keep it down, it may have to be injected."

Ron gulped. "Injected?"

"Yes, Weasley. With a needle. I'm sure you understand the concept," Snape said sarcastically.

"Sir, er..."

"I'll teach you how to do it, Weasley. Potter can do it himself most of the time, I'm just teaching you in case he can't. Can you handle this? Because if you can't, I need to find someone who can," Snape said seriously, though without his usual snappish tone.

"No, I can do it if someone teaches me," Ron said, feeling slightly uneasy at the thought of having to poke a needle into his best friend's arm.

"This one, is perhaps the most important. You must remember this one, because if you ever need to use it, it's very probable there won't be anyone around to remind you how to do it. This is for emergencies. If there is another incident like the one in the hallway a few months ago, if he collapses, you must inject this into his system as quickly as you can. If he's not too far off, it should bring him back long enough to get the proper potions into him, if it's worse, it should

at least keep him alive until somebody gets there. Do you understand?"

Ron nodded solemnly.

"I know it's unpleasant to think of these things, but it's a reality you must be prepared for," Snape said, almost regretfully. "Granger, wake up Potter. Weasley, are you sure you can do this?" he asked, pulling out a syringe from a drawer. Ron nodded nervously.

Hermione shook Harry until his eyes fluttered open.

"What time s'it?" Harry mumbled groggily. "Where..." he started, looking blankly around.

"We're in Professor Snape's office, remember Harry?"

As Harry began to wake up slightly more, he watched confusedly as Snape showed Ron how to fill a needle and tap it for air bubbles, and then making Ron do it himself.

"It's imperative to get rid of any air, or there's a risk of death," Snape said. Ron blanched.

"I can't do this."

"Weasley, I trust that you can, and I don't easily place my trust in people," Snape said quietly.

Ron nodded, trying to not let his fear show.

"No Potter, don't get up just yet. I'm teaching your friend how to give you a shot. He's going to give you an Energy Potion through injection. Is that all right with you?"

Ron and Hermione both were slightly surprised at the professor's concerned tone. Though he still held his usual cold tone, there was something else that the two didn't miss.

Harry looked confused but nodded.

Ron took the syringe and knelt by Harry. He was terrified.

“Ron, it’s okay. I’ve gotten a billion shots before. You’ll do fine. I trust you,” Harry said in a reassuring voice that helped calm Ron’s nerves slightly.

Snape pointed out the vein that Ron was to put it into and explained the angle to do it at.

“All right Weasley, are you ready?”

Ron nodded. Harry looked away, something Ron was very thankful for. He didn’t want to see the wince of pain as the needle went in. He held Harry’s elbow with one hand and the syringe with the other.

“Better not hurt me Ron, or Hermione might just beat you up,” Harry teased with a smirk.

Ron laughed, remembering Hermione’s punch to Malfoy’s face. Harry seemed to be taking the shot as a light matter, and Ron’s nerves immediately relaxed.

He took a deep breath and stuck the needle into Harry’s arm. Harry stiffened slightly as Ron pushed in the plunger, sending the potion into Harry’s bloodstream. Ron pulled out the needle quickly but smoothly, and immediately stuck a piece of cotton that Snape gave him over the small hole.

Harry held the cotton ball to his arm and bent his arm a few times to get the circulation going.

“Aw come on Ron, that didn’t even hurt. What’s the fun of playing doctor if you don’t even get to make people cry when you jab needles into them?” Harry joked.

“Doctor?” Ron asked in confusion.

“Healer,” Hermione corrected Harry.

"Yeah that," he said as he sat up off of Hermione's lap.

"How is that working, Potter?" Snape asked with apparent ambivalence.

"It's great professor; I'm not feeling tired at all. Thank you," Harry said sincerely.

"All right, but as I just told Weasley, no more today. He can inform you about the doses you are permitted to take. Now, I do have better things to do than entertain three Gryffindors, so take your potions and leave," he said in his usual cold tone.

Ron and Hermione rushed out of the office, but Harry lingered slightly. He turned back at the door.

"Thank you, Professor...for everything," he said quietly enough that Hermione and Ron wouldn't hear him. He then slipped out of the office, grabbed his stuff and quickly caught up to his two friends who were waiting for him.

Snape was momentarily stunned and stared at the closed door for a few minutes after the students had left. It wasn't too often that people appreciated anything he did.

He suddenly realized that his mouth was resting in a half-smile. It scared him. He hadn't smiled in...he thought back and couldn't remember the last time he smiled. Immediately, he put his usual scowl on his face and felt significantly more at home, but couldn't put any conviction behind it. He silently cursed Harry for screwing up his facial expression system, trying to ignore how good it felt to finally have something to smile about.

After classes that day, Harry was standing in the halls talking to Ron, Eloise and Neville when he felt somebody tugging lightly at his robes. He looked down to see Charles Crabbe looking up at him with a black eye and a proud expression.

"Hey Harry," he said cheerfully.

"Merlin, Charles, what happened?" Harry asked, taking in the black eye. If anything, Charles looked even more cheerful at the question.

"Well, I was walking toward my dorm and there was some people in my house picking on this Gryffindor, Dennis Creevey or something. Anyways, I don't know what came over me but I used that Expelliarmus thing you taught me on them and told the Gryff to run. And then, one of the Slytherins told my brother what I did, and Vincent punched me in the face. But I told him I thought house rivalries are stupid and that I don't want to bully people around like him. Then I ran for my life, and I think he might kill me, but I don't really care. The Gryffindor came up to me after and said thank you. He compared me to you. He said I acted like a hero," he said beaming.

"Charles, that's great! Are you sure that's what you want though? Your brother and housemates might give you a hard time about it, if that eye is any indicator," Harry asked worriedly.

"Of course I'm sure! I figured out that I don't really want to be like Vincent. He just follows Draco around all the time. I do not want to follow someone around all the time and act like their slave," he said firmly.

"Well good for you!" Eloise said. Charles beamed at her.

Suddenly Harry felt himself being roughly whipped around. He was soon facing a very looking older Crabbe brother.

"Wha are you doing wif my brover?" Crabbe growled. Harry realized that was probably the longest sentence he'd ever heard Crabbe say before. He didn't think it would be appropriate to comment on this fact in front of Crabbe's younger brother.

"We were just talking," Harry said calmly.

"You been puttin' idears in 'is head."

"Your brother is a very smart person. He can decide for himself what he does. You could learn a lot from him."

Crabbe grabbed Harry by the collar, but there were immediately four wands trained on him, including Charles's wand.

"Don't even think about it," Neville said in his most menacing tone, which was about as frightening as a flobberworm, but Harry appreciated the gesture.

"Put him down or I'll curse you so bad you won't be able to tell your face from your arse, though it already is a difficult distinction," Eloise put in. Charles chuckled at this.

"Let him go now," Ron said forcefully.

"Yeah, Vincent. Let him go. Let him go or I'll tell mum. She thinks you're a perfect gentleman at school. I'm sure she'd be interested to know that you bully people around in such an uncivilized manner," Charles added.

Crabbe glared at them all but let go of Harry's robes and took a step back.

"I'm gonna tell Dad on you," he growled at Charles.

"If you do, I'll tell Mum on you. So I suggest you keep your mouth shut."

Crabbe was at a loss for words, which didn't come as much of a surprise to anyone, so he just simply walked away, defeated.

"That was a brave show," Ron said to Charles with a smirk. Charles grinned broadly, obviously enjoying this new 'standing up for people' thing.

Harry suggested that Charles go to Madam Pomfrey about his eye before it swelled up too badly and the boy went off to follow the advice, looking ready to conquer the world.

A/N: The next update will probably be this weekend or early next week if you bribe me with enough wonderful reviews as you always do!

Disassembly of Reason: I can't believe you've done so much for me in this past week or so! Your reviews are so detailed and pick up on so many thing that I thought may have been lost upon people. I absolutely adore every one. I think you're one of the very few people who really remember things that have been going on in different chapters and connect them. I could be wrong, but I'm glad to see you're making the connections. Though I can't remember everything throughout your reviews I wanted to respond to, I just want to note that the reason Harry didn't throw off the Confundus was that it took him completely by surprise. Harry still has an innocence about him and didn't really think Cho would do anything that low. Even now he doesn't believe that Cho would have done anything seriously bad to him, though we could probably imagine that she would. And even with all the reassurances from loved ones, he still feels like a burden and therefore is very hesitant to go to anyone with personal problems. Anyways, thank you so much for your insight and for the obvious time you've spent in reviewing to my fic. I can't tell you how much it means. (Okay it sounds corny, but we'll go with it.)

Eowyn of Ithilien: Yay! I'm glad you haven't abandoned me or I'd be extremely sad. Don't worry, I understand the hectic-ness of life. I'm glad you liked the Gryffs picking on a Sly thing! I thought it would make a good change, as stupid prejudices are obviously thematic in this story. LOL!! Snape singing Macho Man. *Most incredibly hilarious mental picture!* No I seriously doubt that anyone in their right mind thinks Rod Stewart is even near sexy. Confundus was mentioned in conjunction with the Goblet of Fire, as a way to try and get by it, but I just expanded what it could possibly be used for. LOL! Your brother's toe fungus, lovely. Yes, Cho must die for trying to corrupt our poor little Harry.

Terence: Hello dahling. Thank you so much for keeping touch. Your emails have been a great stress reliever this past week, though, as I said above, I have developed an annoying eye twitch. An eye twitch!!

Like a mad scientist or something. Or maybe like Snape! Oh cool!!
pets twitching eyelid fondly Okay, no, it's still getting on my nerves. Just in response to your last review, Ron already knows about the abuse, and Hermione...don't count on it for now. Right, that made no sense. Looks cautiously around for scary llamas that you said would ravage my house. One's sitting on my bed, eyeing me. He won't attack because my twitching eye scares him. Great.

Thundering Lights: OH MERLIN'S GREAT BEARD!!! I honestly have no clue how I skipped over you!! I'm so sorry! I didn't mean anything by it, I swear! Forget you? NEVER!! Confundus was mentioned in conjunction with a suggestion on how to trick the Goblet of Fire (which wouldn't work) so I just suggested what it might do to a human. Cho is a scary person. Yes, I did alright on my civics test, thanks for asking! But I'm royally screwed for my English test tomorrow. Oh well. Congratulations on your test grades!! Remember, I love you my dear and won't ever purposely leave you out. It was just a mistake that I feel very badly about.

Dadaiiro: Yeah, Cho's a scary girl. So obsessive, don't worry, though, she'll get her comeuppance. Glad you liked the chapter! Hope you like this one!

PennyPacker: Thank you! Lol, yes, Harry and Ginny forever! Lol, OMG you predicted the end!! Harry IS going to get a pet flamingo named Wulfric who eats onions!!!! Oh wait, that's my other fic. Woops, oh well, I guess you'll have to just wait and see what happens!! Thank you for the wonderful compliment, and don't worry, I promise to finish this fic, even though, I have been very bad with updating.

PussyKat: Merlin's beard! You're reading my fic for a third time? Aren't you getting sick of it? Well, thanks for the enthusiasm!! It's contagious, I assure you! Ooh, let me assure you I have something up my sleeve for Cho...and for Harry for that matter, but that's a bit of a different story. Lol.

Paranoiain2005: hahahaha, yes Cho definitely needs an ass kicking. Let's see...who should I give that privilege to? Hmm...oh wait, I know (being that I just wrote that scene). You'll find out soon. Hint, it's uh,

not you. Sorry. Unfortunately, I thought it would be a little strange to have you burst into Hogwarts and kick her ass. Might start some Voldemort paranoia or something....

SiriusWolf: I think you're getting a good sense of things in the scale of the story. I'll definitely have to take a look at your fics at some point, though I regret to say that it may not be very soon. I'm so overwhelmed right now, but as soon as I can, I will take a look.

Shawn Pickett: LOL! I love you. You're so hilarious. That is true though!! She is a freaky rapist type person, but what is the one thing that means the most to Cho? Think of all the stuff she's trying to do and her motives for doing it and think of what means the most to her. That's your hint for what will be her comeuppance. Don't worry, she'll get hers soon.

Black Cobra: Deal. Now I just got to get rid of Angelina and you'll have to make sure George stays single. I'd watch out for Kota. *looks around with shifty eyes* I'm soo relieved you don't think Dakota's a Mary-Sue. Thank you so much.

Kathfire: Lol, you got to love the random bursts of laughter and the strange looks you get. Who doesn't like Sirius? I can't believe you're Dutch, your English is amazing!!

LilynJamesAAF: Thank you! I'm glad you like the Halloween idea! I'm lucky that my two best friends are HP freaks as well. Actually, my whole school is. It's weird, we're like the only HP loving highschool ever! When the first movie came up, half the school wore count down shirts for the week before and three of the teachers dressed up like Hogwarts professors on the day of. Honestly, most of the classes were practically empty toward the end of the day since everyone checked out early to go see it. Aside from prom day, it was the biggest line at the lunch check-out window I've ever seen, except for the following year with HP2. Can't wait for HP three. Over half of my chem class is getting together at midnight at the movies in our pajamas to see it. My best friends and I are making a HP day out of it! Lol.

Myr Halcyon: lol! I'm glad you liked the points was. "Snape needs to get beaten down every once in a while"....hahahaha!! Don't know why but that struck me as funny! I love the Halloween costume idea, very original!!

LizhowHP: if you liked the Crabbe boy/Harry scene, hopefully you like this one as well. I hope it didn't seem too random or something. Anyways, I gave you some ouchies for Harry and guess what? For practically the entire rest of the story, each chapter has Harry pain! Call it a very early Christmas present! Or Hanukkah or Kwanza or whatever.

Bast4: Jeez, you read the whole thing in one day? That deserves a definite applause. I'm glad I had you in tears!! I take that to mean you were involved in my fic enough to get emotional. Maybe not though, lol. *hands over tissue in triumph* In the most non-sadistic way possible, I love making my readers cry. What will happen? I guess you'll have to see! Muahahaha!

Alternativelyspliced: Thanks! I share your same views on homework right now. Who needs homework anyways? Procrastination is the key of life I say. Glad you like it so far!

Gypsy t. Potter: Wow, thank you!! LOL your friends must think you're psycho, talking about some random girl's HP story. (Don't worry, my friends think I'm psycho as well.) Though it may not seem like it, your review did make me update faster. After reading it, I sat down and wrote this chapter, which hadn't even been started before. Thank you so much for your wonderful review!

ChristinaLupin01442: Love the conversations with the mauraders! I take it this is in a universe where Peter isn't a back-stabbing rat? Poor Snape, what a bummer nick-name like Snivellus. That's rough man.

o Hell o Kitty o: Yes, Cho is a very horrible girl, at least in this fic, (though I did hate her in the fifth book as well). Who shall I let take revenge on her?....(hint: I already know. Hint 2: You'll find out soon.)

Maximum Poofy-Pissed Off Queen: OMG, I know I haven't left a review yet (my computer's acting funny and has been too slow to get to review screens), but I read your story and absolutely loved it! It was fantastic!! I must say that usually, when I read a fic where Harry's hair is long, I can't even bear to read the rest, but yours was good enough to let that tidbit slide. It was sooo fun!! And Draco was just delicious! It was great!! I will leave a review the next second I get a chance.

Cestrel: I know, Cho's a ho. Lol. Yeah, I think that Slytherins just act the way they do in response to the reputation they're given. I mean, Harry was almost in Slytherin, so they obviously can't be all bad! They just happen to have a few people in there that give them a bad reputation!

Fantagal: Oh yes she is! Well, I knew Hermione would get a chance to kick Malfoy's ass, so I thought I'd let someone else do Cho. But who? That is the question!

Shadowarwen: Thank you and very good observation. I do tend to dislike Cho. Alright, so I think she's a raving flirt/bitch who makes girls look bad, but hey, I've had crushes on some very embarrassing people too, so we can understand that Harry can make some honest mistakes there.

Romm: hmm...good observation. We'll have to see!

Tati1: No, thank YOU! Lol, thanks for the wonderful review! I love being hugged.

Ratgirl: Don't worry...drama's making its comeback in the fic.

Kim13: I hope you did take my costume idea. It was a really fun one if I do say so myself! I'm glad to share it! I'm glad you like my fic!! Keep reading and reviewing!!

Vash: Thanks!! Cho is definitely a bitch. Book 5 proves that beyond all doubt. Umm...see you in hell too? Hahahaha

Lindiel Eryn: Yes, well, while dueling, Harry expected curses to be flying at him, but, as you thought, he didn't even think to expect that Cho would try to curse him. It caught him completely off guard.

Stellaluna Melonballer: LOL thank you!! I do feel loved now! Like somebody just gave me a nice big hug! Well I'll give you a nice big hug back and this chapter.

Siri Kat: LOL I think you just summed up the characters of the fic in 9 words, including the necessary sigh. Fred and George do rock. I want to marry Fred.

Wynjara: Phenomenal? Wow, thank you!

Shinta4: Hey thanks! What do you deem embarrassing? I don't think I put him in too embarrassing of situations (except for the Hogsmeade scene *evil laugh* but I had to do that for my own sadistic joy).

Also thanks to: Jedi-Bant, Victoria, Nightscape (oh yes, Cho is a raving biotch), ckat44, Calen, Moonlight4 (lol, glad to be your heartbreaker), Darth Kottaram (Thank you! I'm glad it affected you!), Miss Shadow Prowl, Leigh, EriEka127, star*dust, Arctic Wolf2, Rain Warrior.

YOU GUYS ROCK!!

Author's Note: Hey all! This scene got slightly carried away. You see, people were begging for Cho to be punished, so I wrote the first part of this chapter, and then SiriusWolf gave me an idea for a scene that ended up turning into 13 pages that I've now had to split into two different chapters. So this is dedicated to SiriusWolf for the inspiration for what ended up to be a very fun scene to write. I know I promised many of you some angst in this chapter, and I'm sorry. It was the scene's fault! It just wouldn't end! Once again, thanks to Disassembly of Reason for the wonderfully long and in depth reviews!!

* * * * *

That night, Harry walked into the Great Hall and, in seeing who was there, nearly ran back out. The reporter that had written the article in Witch Weekly about him and harassed him in Hogsmeade was standing in the shadows near the Gryffindor table. Yet, when the reporter saw him, though she looked very excited, she made no move to come toward him.

Harry quickly looked at Cho, but the Ravenclaw didn't seem to have noticed the reporter and was chatting away with her friends in between sipping her drink. He cautiously took his seat at the Gryffindor table. He looked up to the headmaster questioningly, but Dumbledore gave him no indication of what was going on, aside from the amused twinkle in his eye.

He was about to ask if anyone knew why a teenage witch magazine reporter was at Hogwarts, just standing off in the shadows, but was interrupted by someone calling for attention at the Ravenclaw table.

Cho had climbed up onto the table and was clapping her hands at people, as if trying to catch a dog's attention.

"As you all obviously know, my name is Cho Chang. You may have seen my name in Witch Weekly a few weeks ago. Let me tell you, it wasn't easy getting there, but took a lot of smart thinking, with my gorgeous looks helping me a bit, to manage to get my name in print," she said proudly, ignoring the fact that everyone was staring at her as if she had grown two heads. "I figured that to become famous by

myself would be a lot of work, so she brilliantly decided that it would be much easier to just date a celebrity. Lucky for me, we have one in our school, Harry Potter! I don't really like the buggler or anything, much too righteous and friends with absolute trash. But he's pretty good-looking and he had the hero and Quidditch star reputation, so I could deal with him. I am an excellent actress and figured I could just fool him into thinking I fancied him. Then we'd date and get me into the limelight."

Everybody's jaws, including Harry's, was hanging open at this point. Many people started whispering or giggling. Harry looked to the reporter. She looked as if she had just been announced as Minister of Magic as a magical quill jotted down everything Cho was saying.

"Unfortunately, Harry wasn't as eager to go along with my plan as I thought. I mean, he asked somebody else to the dance and wouldn't ditch her to go with me! And then at the dance, he got mad because I told them that the Weasley girl's family was poor. How was I supposed to know that he was that close with them? He was so snappy! I even tried kissing him out on the balcony, but he told me that he wouldn't go out with someone who was just trying to get into the Daily Prophet. He was supposed to fancy me! That was the last straw."

By now, the whole hall had figured out that Cho must be under the influence of some kind of potion or spell to be admitting to all this stuff. Students began looking around the hall trying to determine who had done it. Most gazes fell onto the twins, who looked as shocked at Cho's confession as everyone else.

"So I called up some reporters and told them I'd meet them in Hogsmeade. I told them I was Harry's girlfriend, saying he was too protective of me to announce our relationship himself. The press bought it. Then Harry showed up, which definitely wasn't part of the plan. He messed the whole thing up by denying it. Luckily I had spied on him in the Quidditch changing rooms one time and knew about this ugly scar on his stomach."

At this, everyone either gaped at Cho or began laughing. Many eyed Harry, whose eyes had gone wide. His face burned as people looked

at him in shock. Cho had watched him change? He shuddered at the thought.

Cho's friends desperately tried to pull their friend down off the table, but she just kicked at them and told them to leave her alone. She shook her hair as she regained her composure and began again with her plastic smile on her face.

"Then, I thought of the brilliant idea of taking pictures of Harry and I snogging. The problem was that he had made it quite clear that he didn't want to. I followed him for a few days until I finally caught him alone. I caught him off guard and put the Confundus Curse on him and led him to the girl's lavatory. Maria took pictures while I snogged Harry. He wasn't being a good sport about it either and kept murmuring for me to get off of him. He didn't know what he was talking about anyway; he didn't even know where he was. Then, stupid Granger caught us and was so rude. She ruined all our film and put us in body binds and performed the counter curse on Harry. I'm still thinking of a way to get her back. I still think my last plan with the pictures was good for Harry, but next time I'll make sure to have someone keep guard and Obliviate his memory afterwards."

As her last words left her mouth, a look of realization melted over her face. She looked positively sick.

The Slytherin table began whistling and clapping as they laughed. The rest of the hall broke out into excited whispers. The Ravenclaws looked positively embarrassed and shocked. Cho's friends had their faces in their hands or were looking horrified at their friend.

"No! No, I was lying. Th—that wasn't true. I...no!" she yelled, trying to take it back, but nobody was listening.

The reporter finally came up to Harry.

"Harry, is that true?" she asked, nearly jumping up and down in excitement.

"Er...yeah. Every word. Except for what she's saying now about lying before," he said, still slightly shocked himself.

“So Cho Chang and you have never had a relationship.”

“No.”

“And you aren’t in a relationship with anyone right now?” she asked.

“Er...no,” he said, a bit embarrassed at the personal question. He felt he better answer it before any new rumors about his mystery girlfriends got out.

“Are you hoping to have a relationship with anyone in particular?” she asked excitedly.

Harry blushed.

“All right, Miss Snider, I believe you’ve gotten enough for your magazine tonight,” Dumbledore said, leading the reporter away from Harry.

“Just one more...” she started, twisting back, but Dumbledore led her out of the Great Hall.

Harry turned to the twins. “Did you guys...”

“No,” interrupted Fred. “We were working on a Bragging Potion last summer, but never really went anywhere with it since it just turned out to be extremely annoying rather than funny. Whatever Chang had was different. Ours had people bragging about bunches of things they never did.”

“But then who did it?” Ron asked.

While everyone around seemed bewildered, Hermione was looking very amused. Ron gaped at her.

“Hermione, you?”

“Harry, I only wish I had thought up something that ingenious. But, I’m pretty sure whatever that potion was, it wasn’t something I’ve seen before.”

“You mean there’s actually something you don’t know about?” Ron asked incredulously.

“No, it means that somebody invented it, Ron,” Hermione said indignantly. “And I do not act like I know everything.”

Ron opened his mouth to say something sarcastic, but Harry caught his eye with a pointed look and shook his head. This was their secret signal to prevent the stupid fights the two used to get into. Ron closed his mouth and thought for a second for a way to turn it into a compliment.

“Of course you don’t act like you know everything, you’re just a very smart girl,” he recovered.

“Thank you. I’ll let the fact that that was a total suck-up comment slide,” she said giving Ron a quick kiss before he could comment about exactly who was calling him a suck-up.

“Well, whoever did it, thank you. You saved my life!” Harry said loudly enough for those around him to hear.

“You make Cho sound like some evil force that somebody’s just stopped,” Fred laughed.

“Have you met her?” Harry asked seriously.

They all looked up to see Cho threatening violence on whoever was responsible, as Professor Flitwick tried to calm her down. Finally Snape walked up and ordered her out into the hall and, with a slightly evil smirk, assigned her detention with him for the rest of the year. The malicious grin on Snape’s face almost made Harry feel sorry for her. Almost.

Though she was rather daft, in Harry’s opinion, at least she wasn’t thick enough to disobey Snape. She stomped out of the Great Hall

indignantly as people shouted for everyone to watch out for her in deserted hallways and while changing. As she passed, the Slytherins all pulled their cloaks around them as if trying to cover themselves, howling with laughter.

"Watch out, everyone, it's peeping Cho!" one of them yelled out, pretending to be terrified she would rip off his clothes. Harry momentarily wondered why they were supposed to dislike the Slytherins.

Though Cho had definitely gotten her name to be recognized, Harry somehow doubted that this was the reputation she had been going for.

They all turned back to their meals.

"How's Kota?" George asked casually.

"She's good," Harry said, not mentioning the fact that her letters now seemed sad and full of worried questions. "But why ask me? I thought you two had been writing back and forth."

"Oh we have been, but she seems kind of sad and won't tell me what's wrong. Besides, I wanted to know if she's mentioned me to you?" he asked anxiously.

"Oh, maybe once or twice," Harry said nonchalantly with a smirk, hoping to distract him from asking anything about why Dakota might be sad. George immediately perked up.

"Well then, let's have it. What has she said?" he asked, leaning forward eagerly.

Harry sighed dramatically. "Unfortunately, that's top secret information. If I told you, I'd have to kill you," he said with a shrug. George looked slightly taken aback.

Ginny, who was sitting next to her brother, laughed.

“Don’t worry, George, it’s from a Muggle movie. It’s a joke,” she explained. The week before, Harry had tutored her in Muggle sayings, which had led them to popular quotes from movies.

The other Weasleys shot her a quizzical look, not knowing what movies were.

“Oh no, you’re turning into Dad,” said George.

“Except, you actually know what you’re talking about,” added Fred.

Ginny caught Harry’s eye with a thankful smile. Harry thanked Merlin that he wasn’t cursed with a blush as obvious as Ron’s. He looked over to find Hermione staring at him, trying to hide a grin. Harry silently cursed himself for ever letting his crush on Ginny slip to her.

As dinner was finished, and everyone was filing out, Harry felt a hand on his arm. He turned around to find an anxious-looking Ginny.

“Hey Harry, can I talk to you for a sec?” she asked.

“Of course,” he said, slipping back, away from Ron and Hermione, in the sea of people who were trudging off to their dorms into a side hall. Ginny and he walked side by side toward the dorm, away from prying ears.

“Well, I just wanted to ask, um...for Muggle Studies...well a lot of the students don’t really understand what movies are...”

“I can go over it with you again if you’d like,” Harry interrupted.

“No, that’s not...what I meant is that we’re going on a field trip to a Muggle movie theater tomorrow night and I know it’s sort of late notice, but since you’re the one who’s taught me all about this, I was wondering if you wanted to come,” she said, trying to look calm while nervously twisting a small section of her robe.

“Really? That’s allowed?” he asked, surprised at the question.

"Yeah, I asked my professor and it's fine, but only if you want to, you know. If you have something else to do, that's fine, I was just..."

"I'd love to go!" he said, stopping her rant. Ginny looked extremely relieved and excited.

"Great! Um, we're leaving at around six tomorrow night, so do you want to meet in the common room around 5:45?"

"Yeah, that sounds great, Bubasti," he said as they reached the Fat Lady.

"All right, great. Just remember to wear Muggle clothes," Ginny said happily. "I guess I'll see you then."

"Right, see you."

Ginny disappeared up the girls' dorm staircase.

For not the first time in his life, Harry wished he had some better fitting Muggle clothes rather than the ratty hand-me-downs from Dudley. He would wear one of the sweaters Mrs. Weasley had made for him, but the weather was too warm for it. He looked at his reflection and sighed.

"Put on some clothes that fit you!" the mirror scolded. "Whatever new trend this is, it makes you look like a ragamuffin."

"I don't have anything else," Harry said with a glare.

"Can't you wear those lovely green dress robes? They make you look so smart."

"No, we have to wear Muggle clothes."

"Oh. Well, you look nice then, dear," the mirror said awkwardly. "Just fix your hair and you'll look...presentable."

Harry scowled at the mirror and told it to shut it, while fingering a hole in his shirt.

He looked up when he heard someone chuckling. Ron was watching him in amusement from the doorway.

“Too bad it’s seven years bad luck to break a mirror, eh?” Ron said quietly. “What are you doing wearing your Muggle clothes?”

Harry didn’t know why he hadn’t told Ron about the movies, besides the fear of torture from a band of overprotective brothers. But Ginny had only asked him because he had been tutoring her. But then again, according to Hermione, she had only invited him.

“Er...Ginny invited me to go with her Muggle Studies class on a field trip to the movies,” he said casually, slightly worried that Ron would make a lunge for his throat. Instead, the redhead got an excited smirk on his face.

“Oh, you’re going on a date with my sister, are you?” he asked in amusement.

“No, it’s with her whole Muggle Studies class. She just invited me as a friend since I grew up as a Muggle,” he explained.

“Right Harry,” Ron said with a roll of the eyes. “Then why did she only invite you? Why you and not ‘Mione?”

Harry racked his brain for an explanation. He couldn’t tell Ron about the tutoring, since Ginny had asked him not to. There didn’t seem to be much more of an explanation.

“Er...well, we just wanted to give you and Hermione some alone time. You know, study, do homework, the usual stuff I’m sure you two do when you’re alone,” Harry teased, hoping to shift the focus away from himself and Ginny.

“Oh, you call it ‘studying’ do you? Well, I’ll have to be careful the next time you want to go ‘study’ with Ginny,” Ron said with a laugh. He paused for a quick second before looking slightly disgusted. “Okay, right. Completely disgusting and wrong mental picture. Ugh!” he said shaking his head. Harry laughed.

“Don’t worry, Ron. Ginny and I...we’re just...friends,” he said with a nod.

“Right, Har...friends. Well, stop sighing over your clothes. She’s seen you in them practically every summer,” he said reassuringly.

Harry looked away from the mirror quickly. “I’m not worried about how I look, Ron. We’re just going as friends!”

As Harry began walking past Ron out the door, but Ron stopped him. “Well, hypothetically, if you did fancy my sister, there’s nobody I would approve of more for her.”

Harry blushed and looked down at his feet. “Er...thanks Ron, but we’re just friends. Now I have to go or I’ll be late.”

“All right. Have fun!” he called. “But not too much fun!”

“Oh bugger off, Ron!” Harry called back and made his way down the stairs.

When he got to the common room, Ginny jumped up from the couch with a smile. Harry was slightly relieved to see that she was wearing second-hand clothes as well: a plaid skirt with thick tights and a slightly large gray shirt.

“Ready to go?” she asked cheerfully.

“Yeah, I didn’t keep you waiting too long, did I?” he asked worriedly.

“Not at all, I just sat down right before you got here.”

“Good,” he said in relief as they walked toward the portal. “Excited for your first Muggle movie?” he asked with a grin.

“Yes!” she said as they got into the corridor. “I’ve heard you explain it so many times, but I can’t really picture what it’s like. But it sounds so wonderful and now I’ll get to see one for myself. Dad will be so jealous!” she laughed.

"Yeah, I've only see a couple movies in the actual theater. It's really fun though!" he said, matching her enthusiasm.

They soon arrived at the Great Hall where the rest of the class was meeting, along with a few others that had been invited along. In small groups, they Portkeyed to the back of an alley. Everyone was chatting excitedly, and as the professor led them out into the plaza, everyone pointed out all the strange Muggle things.

"Look, look! That person's talking on one of those cell-phone things!"

"And look at their clothes! Merlin, how funny!"

"There's that food place that they all eat at! McDonners?"

"McDonalds! See, there's the sign, and it's all lighted up by electricity!"

"Oh Harry, is that a pay phone right there?" Ginny asked excitedly.

"Yup, and see that right there? That's a bicycle," he said pointing it out.

A woman walked by speaking with her friend loudly. "And I told him, 'Oh my God, you're not Prince William so stop acting like bloody royalty!'" she said, sending the class into fits of excited giggles.

"Oh my God, Susan. Just oh my God!"

"Well, all I can say to that is, oh my God."

"Oh, you two, stop acting like bloody Prince William!" they all imitated with glee.

While the professor went up and bought the class their tickets, Ginny and Harry went over to look at the movie posters.

"Oh, Kota told me about that one!" Harry said pointing out one. "She said it's really scary."

Ginny looked at him with a raised eyebrow. "A Muggle movie being scary? I seriously doubt it."

"Well, why not? I mean, I've never seen a movie that's actually scared me, but I haven't seen too many horror movies period. But I've heard there are some really scary ones."

"I'll believe it when I see it," she said skeptically. "I mean maybe it's scary to them, but we know magic, and it wouldn't be the same knowing that if it was me, I'd just put the bad guy in a body bind and be done with it."

"Well, not all horror movies are with just Muggle stuff. They have scary ones about what they call 'supernatural' stuff like ghosts, demons, and other stuff. And a lot of their versions of things are much scarier than in actual life. Poltergeists for instance. They're not like Peeves. There was this one where it pulled a girl into the telly or something. It wasn't very scary, but you get the point."

"I really don't think that something Muggles just make up without knowing anything can scare me," she said with a shrug.

"Oh really?" Harry said amusedly. "Well, I guess we'll see if that's the movie we're going to."

"Well, as long as it's not this one," she said, pointing out the poster next to it. There was a picture of a blonde woman with shopping bags and a cell phone with a caption that read, "Taking over the world, one sale at a time."

"I agree," Harry said, pulling a face.

"All right class, over here!" she called, waving them over. The excited students all ran over to her eagerly. She handed them each their tickets. Harry and Ginny looked at theirs and their faces immediately fell.

"We're going to see a movie about shopping?" one boy groaned in disgust.

"It was the only one with an appropriate rating that I thought you all might enjoy. Now, no complaining. It should be an interesting movie, and if you don't enjoy it, you could actually use it as a learning experience and try to identify the things we've covered in class in it. Now, follow me, no wandering," she said, leading the way into the movie theater.

Everyone gazed around at the Muggle teenagers playing arcade games, and the long line of people in line for snacks.

"Well, this is just our luck, isn't it," Ginny grumbled as they handed over their tickets to the ticket checker. He handed them back their stubs as they walked through to the long corridor of theater doors.

Harry grabbed Ginny's wrist and slowed his step, getting her to do the same. She raised an eyebrow as the rest of the class passed them, putting them at the back of the crowd.

"Do you really want to test your theory about Muggle movies not being scary?" he asked quietly.

A mischievous grin crossed her face. "Oh yeah."

They walked through the door of the shopping flick and peered around at the professor to make sure she didn't take role. When she didn't, the two sneaked back into the hallway, continuing a few doors down until they reached the one with the scary movie inside.

The previews were just finishing, so the lights were already down.

"Do you see any seats?" Ginny whispered.

"Think of who you're asking, Gin. I can hardly see in normal light."

She shook her head with a chuckle. "Oh wait, I see two. Here, follow me," she said leading him to a row. They had to squeeze by a few people before plopping down into some empty seats.

As the scene began, Ginny leaned over. “Oh give me a break,” she whispered, “the scary villain is a little girl? Oh wait, okay that is a creepy looking little girl.”

“Well, I think she’s supposed to be, well something. A ghost maybe? A demon? Something not normal.”

“Yeah, but still, it’s not sca—AAHHHH!”

Harry’s eyes went wide as the first victim was killed off in an extremely gruesome way after the scary demon girl popped out from behind him. It turned out to be the first of many jumpy and creepy scenes.

Ginny was curled up in a ball on her seat with her hands over her mouth, while Harry was doing the same except with his hands poised over his ears.

The main character walked into a dark room and when he turned on the lights, there was a body hanging from a ceiling fan. Ginny squeaked and Harry jumped.

“Who’s bright idea was this?” she whispered.

“Do you want to leave?” he whispered back.

“No, I want to see what happens. Oh Merlin, you stupid girl, don’t go that way you idiot! Just get out of the damn house, you stupid AHH!” she murmured, grabbing Harry’s arm as she screamed, causing Harry to gasp and nearly have a heart attack. “What are they doing, Harry? What is that?”

“That’s a gun. A Muggle weapon that kills things,” he explained in a whisper.

“Then why isn’t it working?” she asked desperately, not tearing her eyes from the screen.

“Because she’s not human.”

“So spells...”

“Wouldn’t work, I’d guess.”

“Oh Merlin.”

The movie ended with the demon-ghost girl still on the loose, after the audience had momentarily thought the hero had killed it.

Harry and Ginny were still sitting in their chairs in a slight shock.

“So I guess movies can be scary,” Ginny said in a higher voice than normal due to a restricted throat.

“Guess so,” Harry gulped. The two looked at each other momentarily before jumping up and following everyone out, grabbing onto each other’s arms while still in the dark.

Luckily, the other movie got out at the same time. Harry and Ginny just melted back into the crowd of students. Most looked incredibly bored or tired, trudging along after the professor.

“Where were you two?” somebody asked from behind them. Ginny barely suppressed a scream as the two whipped around.

“Er...we saw a different movie, Kyle,” Ginny explained, while trying to calm her pounding heart.

“Yeah, sure,” he said, wiggling his eyebrows before darting off. Both of them blushed and avoided the other’s eye.

“Harry, maybe we shouldn’t tell anyone that we saw a scary movie. I know that Fred and George would never stop popping out from corners just to freak me out, you know?”

“Yeah, who could blame them? I’d probably do the same if they were the ones who were scared because of a movie. So we saw a movie about shopping then?”

“Yup, and what a movie it was!” she said sarcastically.

As they got to the alley, they slowed down.

“Harry, in the movie wasn’t umm...”

“...somebody brutally murdered in a dark alley? Yeah,” Harry said nervously.

“Oh good. Just wondering,” she gulped. The two stayed extremely close as they walked into the alley and joined a group who was Portkeying out.

Both were extremely relieved to find themselves back in the well-lit Great Hall.

“All right, to your dorms with all of you,” the professor said with a clap of the hands.

The pair walked toward their dorm, not as confident now that they were in the darkened corridors. They gripped each other’s arms tightly.

“Is it always so dark in here?” Harry asked, eyes darting into every dark corner.

“Er...I don’t know, but it shouldn’t be. Too many shadows and dark places. It could be dangerous, you know?” she said nervously. “Too many places for things to hide.”

“You mean like demon-ghost girls of death?” Harry suggested apprehensively. Both chuckled while looking around cautiously.

They walked along in silence for awhile, ears strained for any strange noises.

They turned a corner to find a girl standing there. Harry and Ginny screamed, Ginny wrapping her arms around Harry’s arm tightly, unintentionally preventing him from turning around to run, as he was trying to do.

“Woah guys, it’s just me,” said the girl in a familiar voice. “Lumos.”

Hermione’s face came into view. Ginny let go of Harry’s arm as they both tried to compose themselves and calm their pounding hearts.

Hermione raised an eyebrow. “How was the movie?”

“Er...good,” Harry said, catching Ginny’s eye.

“Very educational,” Ginny piped in.

“Wasn’t it about shopping?” Hermione asked suspiciously.

“Yeah, who knew about all those Muggle sales and stuff?”

Hermione crossed her arms with a smirk. “Okay, let me guess. You, for some odd reason,” she said sarcastically, “didn’t want to see a movie about a snobby rich woman at the mall, maybe it reminded Harry of Cho or something, and so you sneaked into a scary movie instead? Now you’re scared but don’t want to tell anyone in fear of them teasing you and trying to scare you even more.”

Harry and Ginny gaped at her.

“How do you do that?” Ginny asked in wonder.

“It’s a gift,” she said with a dismissive shrug. “Don’t worry, I won’t tell Ron, but you might want to work on the whole ‘not screaming at the slightest movement’ bit. Well, I have to finish making my rounds for tonight. Try to make it to the common room without having massive heart attacks, okay?” she said with a smile. She caught Harry’s eye knowingly as she walked by.

“G’night Hermione,” Ginny said, slightly embarrassed at her freaking out earlier.

“Night ‘Mione,” Harry mumbled, hoping Ginny didn’t notice Hermione’s look. Hermione seemed to know what she was doing, however, as Ginny seemed oblivious.

They got to the common room without further incident. The room was deserted and everything was quiet.

"Thanks for coming tonight, Harry. It was much more fun than going with the rest of the class to see the other movie," Ginny said with a smile.

"Well thanks for inviting me. It was much more fun than sitting around listening to Ron and 'Mione be all lovey-dovey with each other."

"Well, goodnight Harry," Ginny said fondly as she began to make her way up the staircase.

"Night Ginny," he said with a smile as he headed up his own staircase.

That night, Harry couldn't get to sleep. Despite repeating to himself that he had faced a supreme dark lord multiple times, he couldn't shake the fear that the ghost girl from the movie would be under the bed or behind the curtain. Every time he closed his eyes, they soon shot open again to make sure she wasn't there, poised to brutally kill him. The shadows kept taking the form of frightening forms.

At around two in the morning, he finally realized that he wouldn't get to sleep and was too freaked out to stay in the dark room. He grabbed his blanket, wrapping it around his shoulders, and quietly, but quickly, made his way to the common room. There, he could hopefully start a fire in the fireplace for some light.

When he got there, however, a familiar redhead was already on the couch with the fire going.

"Ginny?" he asked quietly.

She jumped a mile and gasped. When she saw him, she put a hand on her chest to calm her breathing. As he got closer, she shot him a playful glare.

"Don't do that!" she scolded. Then her expression turned soft. "Bad dream?"

“No,” he said trying to sound brave.

Ginny gave him a skeptical look.

“You have to actually get past the idea that there’s a murderous girl after you and go to sleep before you can have bad dreams.”

Ginny chuckled and scooted over to give him room on the couch to sit.

“What about you? What are you doing down here at the wonderful hour of two in the morning?” he asked, laying his blanket over both of their laps since Ginny hadn’t brought one.

“Thanks. Bad dream for me. I bet you can guess what about.”

“Sorry for suggesting going to that movie,” Harry said apologetically. Ginny laughed.

“Don’t apologize. It was fun! I’d definitely go see a scary movie again,” she said, with a thoughtful pause, “though maybe not for a while.”

“I think I can agree with you there,” he said through a yawn.

“Thank Merlin you came down though, because I was just sitting here freaking myself out. I came down here for the light, but then I realized it’s really creepy in here with just the fireplace, but couldn’t get up the guts to go back upstairs,” she admitted.

“Why, think the ghost girl is hiding in one of the dark corners?” Harry teased in a spooky voice. Then both of their faces got a slightly spooked look and they whipped their heads around, trying to make sure nothing was in the dark corners.

They both turned back around and sunk down on the couch.

“Oh good one, Harry. Just freak us both out,” Ginny said sarcastically.

"Hey, nobody said common sense was my strong suit," he said with a shrug.

"No kidding, I mean, you used to like Cho! You asked her to the Yule Ball last year! Common sense? I don't think so," she teased.

"Ugh, don't remind me," he groaned. "But isn't everyone allowed to embarrass themselves at least once in their lives for a crush?"

"I hope so. I mean you can't really top 'His eyes are as green as a fresh pickled toad,'" she said with a laugh, before absolutely blanching at why she would have possibly brought that up with Harry.

Harry burst out laughing.

"Don't laugh! It was so horrible!" she said, trying to hide her embarrassment.

Harry looked at her with amusement. "It wasn't horrible. It was really nice, I was just being a total prat. But you must admit, in retrospective, it was quite hilarious."

"Oh yes, the memories. You, pinned to the ground by a freakish cupid dwarf, my absolutely horrid poem being sung out, with Malfoy there may I add, and the whole crowd laughing until they cried. Yes, quite hilarious," she said sarcastically. But then, catching the amused look on Harry's face, she began to laugh. "Okay, it was humiliating but funny."

"Well, don't worry, I had my wonderful moment with Cho as well. All her little friends giggling like mad when I wanted to ask her to the ball. I think it came out something like 'Wangoballwime,'" he said pulling a face. "And then there was the whole pitying 'oh the poor fool' look."

"Interesting turn on that situation, though," she said comfortingly.

"No kidding. Now that I look back at it, thank Merlin she said no. I really was a poor fool," he said with a laugh. Ginny looked elated at those words.

“Speaking of Cho, that little confession of hers was my little thank you for tutoring me in Muggle Studies.”

Harry gaped at her. “That was you?” he asked incredulously.

“Yeah, but don’t tell Fred and George since I had to steal one of their unfinished potions inventions to do it. I think they’d be rather mad.”

“Are you kidding? I think they’d be proud of you,” Harry said. Ginny looked into his eyes.

“Really?”

“Of course! They’d love to know that you’re taking after them a bit in the...er...creativity department. They’d probably want the recipe though so they could sell it in their shop.

“I take it you’ve heard of their ‘anonymous investor’ then,” Ginny said in amusement. “Now that’s somebody that will take risks.”

“I think it’s a brilliant investment,” Harry said, trying to suppress a grin.

“Well, then you just might be nutters,” said Ginny through a yawn.

Now that both of them were more relaxed, they began to feel fatigue settling over themselves. The heat and crackling of the dying fire was very comforting, and both of them began nodding off.

Half-conscious, the stretched themselves out on the couch, laying the blanket over them both as they lost themselves to a blissful slumber.

A/N: Okay, for those of you who would rather have Cho tortured to death, I apologize, but in a sense, since her reputation is everything to her, she is being tortured now that she’s completely damaged her reputation beyond all repair. Adn then you do have detention with a royally pissed off Snape. Kudos to those who can answer this question: Why would Professor McGonagall choose the password she did for the Gryffindor common room?

Disassembly of Reason: Thank you for your wonderfully in depth reviews! Here we go, let's see how much I can respond to. School smarts are a specific kind of intelligence, and doesn't necessary make one bright enough to pick up on what people mean by their actions. Even if 'Mione's actions were suspicious, he'd most likely think it was just because he'd stepped over the line in his insults or something. Remember, most wizards are under the impression that wizards can't get terminal illnesses like cancer. Lol, I agree, Divination is horrible, but he's a little late to start up another subject and I've always assumed that they must take at least a certain amount of classes (like in my school). I'm so happy you noticed the control thing! Very insightful. I'm glad you picked up on that aspect of Harry's understanding of Snape. Now that June's approaching, everyone, including Snape is getting a bit more edgy. He's now beginning to plan for an emergency, since it's more likely to happen now that his condition is escalating. Yay, glad you picked up on Snape's need to control his facial expressions. That will pop up a bit later. Thank you for the spectacular reviews. I assure you I read them multiple times and love every bit of it. You pick up on so much that I didn't really think anybody would! It makes things way more fun this way!

Dadaiiro: Luckily Ron was able to remain calm. I had a friend with Diabetes who would run around with needles sticking in her to freak all her friends out. I thought it was cool though, so she let me give her her shot every once in a while. It was definitely creepy and probably not the best idea, but thankfully, I didn't kill her. The twins are showing up in the next scene, which is sort of a continuation of this one. Let's just say, Harry and Ginny may not have chose the best place to fall asleep together. Malfoy's very confused right now about Harry, but whatever he's really thinking, we'll have to wait and see. Kota's been sending letters to both Harry and George, as you can see above. Lol, Voldie's a giant mystery at the moment. That is a hard question, and one I can't really answer, but there's always that hope. LizhowHP: Ok!! I lied!! I'm so sorry! *grovels at your feet* I'm so sorry, but I just began writing the scene with Harry and Ginny going to the movies and it just wouldn't end. But next chapter, I solemnly swear to have Harry ouchies, just for you!!

Eowyn of Ithilien: lol. I'm glad I can teach you new things. (Imagines background music of "I can show you the world" from Aladdin). Are you checking out Draco's little, evil bum? Well, it is quite beautiful. Umm..right. I'm glad you liked Hermione and Ron in the last chapter. I've been sort of ignoring Hermione in this fic (at least in comparison to Ron) so I thought she needed a scene to star in. lol redneck? Damn, I was trying to go for crappy British, but looking at it, I can definitely see the redneck! Thank you so much for the wonderful compliment about capturing character's emotions. Honestly, that's such a big part of this story, I'm glad you think it's good.

Myr Halcyon: I'm so sorry about your grandpa. Mine died at the beginning of the summer. This chapter was on a lighter note, but it will go back to angsty in the next few, so if you're in need of a emotionally lifting things, you might want to put off reading this fic for a while. I hope everything turns out alright. And just for you, I delved into the H/G relationship in this chapter and at the beginning of the next. Though they won't get together at this point, since Harry doesn't feel he could do that to her, there's the hinting at it. Wow, I didn't even realize I was having my main characters go through those stages. Thanks for pointing it out! I hope everything's going all right and that maybe the bit of H/G made you smile.

Paranoialn2005: Hope you thought the payback was decent. Otherwise, you can pretend that Ginny tackled her and pummeled her ass. Lol, I'm glad you like Charles!! It was just a random idea that went slightly further than I thought, as is happening a lot in this story.

Terence: Hey! I hope you're feeling much better. Here's a little Cho-bashing to help you get through it, along with some H/G if you like that relationship. (I forget if you're an H/G shipper or and H/H or something else) And yes, Snape really is an old softie, at least for people he likes. And he likes Harry, whether he admits it or not! Yes, school sucks!! Especially when there's so much better things to be doing (i.e. fanfiction). Talk to you soon!

SiriusWolf: Okay, I was reading your review and when you said they should go to the movies, this whole scene suddenly played out in my head! I knew I had to write it! Thank you for the wonderful idea, and

in case you didn't notice, the chapter's dedicated to you! Hope it's what you wanted!

Thundering Lights: Whatever word you were trying for there, I'm guessing it was under the little [omitted] thing. Oh well, I can use my imagination. Thank you for the lecture! It was needed and I thank you for acknowledging that I AM a student with a very hectic schedule. Thank you. That's my motto, I always ask myself if these tests will be important in the major long run, and most often, the answer is no. I just sometimes let myself forget that. No, feel more than free to point out my mistakes. I don't take any offense at all and can then go back and change it before printing out my final copy. Lol, yeah, Disassembly of Reason has definitely done a major feat, but it doesn't make me appreciate all my other reviews any less. I love them all, especially long ones like yours. It makes it more fun that way. I won't stop this fic before the end. That I promise.

PussyKat: Why thank you dahling! And thanks as usual for reminding me to get moving with my updates. If you like sick or in pain Harry (as I do as well, could you tell?) then you'll probably like next chapter. Maybe I shouldn't have said that, but oh well. It was fun to write about Hermione punching Malfoy. I hope this chapter wasn't too fluffy, though it might have been. I'm sorry, but don't worry, this is basically it in that thing. No snogging or dating for Harry and Ginny. I'm sorry you're depressed about some things right now. I hope everything works out for the best! (I'll send Snape over to give you a hug. He'll probably deny it afterwards, but maybe you could get Colin Creevey to take a picture of it for proof.)

BratPrincess-187: I'm glad you like Charles. Well, Malfoy is a mystery to us all. Keep in mind, he has to look tough and mean in front of his friends. Whether that's what he's actually feeling or not, who knows? Hahaha, it was so fun to write that scene with Mione punching Malfoy. I wrote it, looked at my computer screen and said "Go 'Mione!" I love being able to play with these characters.

o Hell o Kitty o: Interesting theory, we'll see! Lol, well, there's your Cho revenge! Hope you liked it, and if not, pretend Ginny beat the crap out of her.

Lindiel Eryn: Well, if anything will shut Cho and co. up, I think the fact that everybody thinks she's a giant perve now will. Snape was trying to give Ron a little confidence there, which is fun since it's Snape we're talking about.

PennyPacker: um...transfaerso is just a sort of funky made up word that sounds like transfer. Of course, now, the spells are getting a little crazy, so ignore the fact that this word means transfer while recnac is cancer backwards. Otherwise, some of the spells may not make sense. Lol, I love the Cho hatred. I hope this bit of revenge on her was okay. Lol, I'll keep that in mind for the sequel. :)

Nelum: Why thank you!! I love that song! In fact, many of my sad chapters were written while listening to that song, along with Everclear's "Wonderful." They are my sad mode songs that help me to write sadder scenes. That's so funny that you happened to be listening to it since I was probably listening to it while I wrote the scene!!

Foxfur: I'm so sorry for your friend, and so glad that my story could touch you. I've known many people who've had cancer. Some who have survived, some who haven't. I understand the pain it can cause and also the close relationships that can be formed by it. My guy friend was diagnosed with spinal cancer a few years ago, and all his friends who never showed emotion, who always tried to be so macho, turned into the most sensitive, caring guys I'd ever seen. It's not often you see teenage guys holding another guys hand, even to help them through pain, with all the homophobia that goes on these days, but these guys did. Luckily, this friend is in remission, defying all the doctors. Such a horrible thing turned out to be wonderful for the relationships that deepened so much. This will show up more between Ron and Harry as he gets more ill.

Siri Kat: lol, there's still hope, but it is sure looking that way. Hahaha so many people have lead in them. It's hilarious, in my opinion. It's very fun!

Sparkle Tangerine: Poppet! You sound like one of the cool pirates from Pirates of the Caribbean! A masterpiece?? Wow!! Thanks!! I'm so happy I could make you cry with that chapter. (psst...I cried when

I wrote it!) Well, it wasn't really supposed to be H/G in any other way than just hints at it, but the story has taken on a life of its own. But don't fret, I'm not having them get together in this fic. Harry wouldn't do that to her with his little time left. And yes, Cho is horrid.

Ratgirl: I'm happy you like the inter-house interaction between the rival houses. Little Crabbe was a moment of inspiration and I'm extremely surprised with the positive reaction it got! I'm so happy!

Teazer: Lol! All points taken into consideration, though I don't think Hary's going to get laid in this story. Hahaha! Well, hey, you never know. But maybe he won't die and will still have the chance to be laid. Maybe not. We'll see! (btw, LOVE that little quote)

Shadowarwen: Lol, I will try not to cause you any more tears...or will I? Lol. Yes, Cho is a horrid fiend who is based on some girls I actually know (frightening isn't it.) I'm sure we've all met a Cho at least once in our lives.

Cestrel: Charles thanks you for being proud of him! He's showing off his black eye to anyone who will look at it. Harry...die? well, we'll just have to see about that one, now won't we?

Gwenastar22: Why merci! I'm glad you like my version of Snape. I tried to slow the change in him, since I think many people make it too unrealistic, from cold sadistic bastard to cuddly and caring father-type. I love the Elephant Medly scene and the song! Ooh, I don't know (about your H/G observation). I guess you'll have to see.

Hollie: Wow, you've read this story four times!! That's amazing. Thank you!! Lol, I love the scenes where Harry is in boxers. Mmm...

Ganymade: Thank you! I'm so glad you find it touching. Lol, I wasn't planning on going too far with the H/G aspect of the story, but then this scene popped itself out. But they won't be getting together or snogging or anything, unless another random scene pops out, but I doubt it. I hope you didn't mind! Draco...hmm...that's an interesting one, ain't he? Well, we'll have to see if he shows up again.

Random Person: love the penname!! Yay, love to make you cry! I have just eaten a bag of sweettarts so I perfectly understand sugar rushes. Though now I feel slightly sick.

Gypsy T. Potter: Hahaha!! You hung up on your friend? Brilliant! I love it. Thank you very much for the compliments!

Fantagal: HAHAAHAHA!!!! You had me laughing sooo hard with the line "now I know, I'll ask Dobby to save ur life." I was literally laughing for about an hour. It's fabulous!

Shawn Pickett: Are you so sure about what I'm going to do with Harry? You may be right. We'll see. Lol, I love the whole demons in hell singing songs about Cho. Mental picture of a bunch of demons out doing Christmas Carols about ways to kill Cho.

Blackunicorn: Yeah, cancer runs in my family as well, though I experienced it more closely with a friend of mine. He had spinal cancer though, which is greatly different than Lukemia, but I'm trying to expand my horizons I guess.

Blackenedsoul: Lol, poor Ron. He may be a bit irresponsible, but when it comes to his friends' safety, I think he takes it pretty seriously.

Rain Warrior: Hell yeah you rock! Really? Wow I'm so surprised everybody likes Charles so much! He was just a random burst of inspiration. Lol, hope you liked the chapter.

Also thanks to saz (I'm so glad to hear your son is doing well! Hope you're not too stressed!), jo0609, catiechan (don't worry about it! Thanks), kathfire, Aurumn Breeze, PhoenixPadfoot89, Makotochi, Liliankha, A.247, W'rkncacnter, Leigh, EriEka127, Miss Shadow Prowl, lin-z1, Romm, bulldogchik05, Kim13, ChristinaLupin01442, NightScape, jouve25, Doneril, Maximum Poofy-Pissed Off Queen (I'm always happy to bring people to tears. Hahaha), ckat44 (thank you, I'm glad you like the interaction between characters), and jedidiah

Author's Note: Lol, I was just thinking that nobody probably reads these, but oh well. Here I go anyways. It's a nice long chapter for you all! Just a quick note: Ginny does NOT know about the cancer. Neither do Fred and George, or any Weasley besides Ron. The only students who know are Ron, Hermione, Neville, and Eloise. She was the one who tipped off the reporter as well. Dumbledore, as usual, had his strange knowledge of things going on. Also, the movies from last chapter were totally made up, though the freaky demon-ghost girl is based on the girl from the Ring and from the previews for Gothica where there is another freaky looking girl. The plot, however, was completely random, typical scary movie type stuff, based probably upon the hundreds of scary movies I've seen. The shopping movie was completely random, though I wouldn't be surprised if a movie like that came out. Scared, but not surprised. Oh Oh, who else saw the HP3 teaser preview? What was with the students randomly singing the Macbeth song while holding giant frogs? I can't even imagine a scene that would even make sense to include that. I was laughing so hard!!! And the boggart scene with Snape wearing grandma clothes? YES!!!!

* * * * *

The next morning, Ron woke to someone shaking him.

"Ron. Ron, wake up. You've got to see this."

Ron opened his eyes to find Hermione looking down at him, eyes glittering with excitement. She put a finger to his lips.

"Shh...it's a bit early. Your dormmates are asleep, but come here," she instructed, pulling his hands to help him up and led him out of the dorm.

"Mione what's going on?" he asked sleepily. Hermione just gave him an excited look and put a finger to her lips as she led him down to the common room. At the bottom of the steps, she slowed and led him around so they could see the couch. A smile spread over Ron's face.

There on the couch, lay Harry and Ginny, both fast asleep and looking completely blissful. Ginny was laying her head on Harry's

chest as it slowly rose and fell. Her arm was draped over him, while he had his own draped over her back. Harry still had his glasses on, but they were slightly crooked on his face. Harry's blanket was covering both of them.

"When did this happen?" Ron whispered.

"I'd guess last night, though I'm not sure anything's really happened yet. I think we can relate to somehow managing to fall asleep in a compromising position. Remember the hospital wing?" she said blissfully, remembering when she had woken up to find herself lying cuddled up to Ron.

"But we secretly liked each other. It's not like you fell asleep on Neville or anything."

"Exactly. Isn't it so sweet?" she asked, resting her head on his shoulder as he put an arm around her, the pair gazing at the two on the couch.

Ron cocked his head to the side. "Yeah, but I think Ginny might be drooling on Harry a little," he said in amusement. Hermione giggled quietly.

"Go ask Colin for his camera," she whispered. Ron grinned evilly.

"You're brilliant," he said, giving her a quick kiss before heading up the stairs.

Ron quickly went into the younger dorm and got consent from a half-asleep Colin to use the camera. He made a quick stop at the seventh year dorm and quietly crept in.

"Fred. George," he whispered, shaking them awake.

"Wha'?" Fred asked groggily.

"Ron?" George asked confused.

Ron put a finger to his lips and motioned for them to follow. They were slightly bewildered, but did as told.

When they got to the bottom, Fred and George broke out into identical grins.

“Brilliant,” they both said in unison at the sight.

Ron took a few pictures.

“Do you reckon we ought to send one to mum?” he asked mischievously. All the Weasleys laughed quietly, knowing how their mother would react.

“She’d have the wedding ready by the time we arrived at King’s Cross,” Fred sniggered.

“Look how happy Ginny looks,” George commented.

“They look good together don’t they?” Ron asked with a smile. Everyone agreed.

Fred frowned. “Are we sure she didn’t drug him?” he asked in a mock-suspicious tone.

“You Weasley boys are awful. The whole lot of you,” Hermione said with a grin. “Now get out of here before you wake them up and spoil the whole thing. They have a few hours until other people start coming down, so let them have that. If they wake up to see all of you staring at them, it’ll be totally ruined.”

The three boys practically skipped to the stairs.

“Was Gin drooling on Harry?” Fred asked as they started up.

Hermione glared at the three sniggering boys, causing them to get up the stairs quickly.

An hour later, the two on the couch were still asleep. The rest of the Gryffindors were beginning to wake up and Hermione gave the

Weasleys permission to wake the pair before others started getting down to the common room.

“Be nice,” she warned. “I know you guys don’t want to mess this up for them, so be nice.”

“Of course, Hermione!” Fred said putting his hands over his heart.

“What kind of people do you think we are?” George asked with an evil grin.

Hermione sighed and sank down into one of the chairs muttering about boys.

“Okay, now everybody has to keep a straight face. Try to look no less than furious,” Fred instructed.

The sniggering boys had to take a few deep breaths before they could plaster angry-looking expressions on their faces. They had been working for the last half hour to perfect the look. Fred picked up a book and slammed it down on the table next to them, causing them both to jerk awake.

Harry tried to sit up, but realized something was weighing him down. He looked down and met Ginny’s eyes, who was still on top of him. They both whipped their heads to the side to see three furious-looking Weasley boys. Ginny scrambled off of Harry in a flash.

Fred seized Harry by the collar of his pajamas and pulled him to his feet.

“What the hell are you doing with my sister?!” he bellowed. Harry was absolutely terrified he looked from Ron to George and then back to Fred, each looking livid.

“Nothing, I swear!” he yelped.

“Fred, what the bloody hell are you doing?” Ginny shrieked.

“Harry, I should have warned you, but if you touch our sister, we’re going to have to hurt you,” Ron said coldly.

“Leave him alone!” Ginny yelled. When Fred showed no sign of letting Harry go, Ginny leaped off the couch, onto his back sending them crashing to the floor and dragging Harry along with them. Ron and George raced over to try to help, laughing hysterically.

“Gin, we were just kid...” Ron started, but with a swift kick to the leg from his little sister, fell into the fray.

George was laughing too hard to actually do anything at this point. Fred was trying to block himself from Ginny’s small fists, while laughing so hard that tears were coming out of his eyes, forgetting that he was still clutching Harry’s pajamas, who was trying to wrench himself free. Ron was trying to wrench Ginny off of Fred, but could hardly breathe from such intense laughter.

“Gin...we were,” Ron paused to gasp for air, “...just...kidding!”

Ginny suddenly realized that all her brothers were laughing and slapped Fred’s arm.

“You’re all horrible. See if I get you guys anything for Christmas ever again!”

She got to her feet and shoved Ron, who was already unstable with laughter, sending him crashing onto Fred. George collapsed to the floor in a fit of laughter.

“Ah Ron, get off me!” Fred yelled, pushing his little brother off.

“Fred...I think you can let go of Harry now,” Ron laughed.

Fred immediately dropped Harry’s pajama shirt.

Ginny held out her hand to Harry and helped him up.

“Sorry mate, but that was just too priceless of an opportunity to pass up,” Fred said cheerfully.

"Your face!" George gasped, pointing at Harry. He put mimicked Harry's earlier expression by putting on the most terrified expression he could muster. The three brothers once again dissolved into peels of laughter. Even Harry and Ginny had to chuckle now.

"Too bad we didn't get some pictures of that," Ron said wistfully once he had calmed down, wiping some tears of mirth from his eyes.

"You don't think I'd let something like that happen without some proof," Hermione said, standing behind the couch. They all looked up to see a camera in her hands.

"Say cheese!" she called, clicking another picture of them all.

Ginny and Harry exchanged a look that clearly said, 'Seize the evidence!' Harry suddenly darted toward Hermione, who shrieked and ran around the other side of the couch. Ginny raced toward her on that side of the couch, but was seized around the middle by Fred, who threw her over his shoulder.

"Put me down, Fred!" she yelled, pounding fists into his back. He spun around in a circle, causing her to shriek and grab onto him for dear life.

Meanwhile, Harry had almost caught up with Hermione, when she darted behind Ron who stuck out his arms to block Harry. All of them were laughing as Harry tried to get past Ron.

"You're going down Weasley!" laughed Harry.

"I don't think so Potter. These pictures are going to be posted all over the Great Hall!"

"And because of your behavior, I'm sending the ones of you two sleeping right to Mrs. Weasley!" Hermione called from behind Ron.

"No, send them to Cho!" Ron said excitedly.

“Hermione, I’m going to kill you!” Ginny screamed in between peels of laughter. Fred spun Ginny around again, making her scream. “Fred” she shrieked, “you’re going to make me sick!”

“Puke on him, Gin!” Harry called. Ron looked over at his sister to see if she really was going to be sick and Harry used the distraction to lunge past him. He reached out to grab Hermione but was tackled from behind by George. “Ginny,” he called, “what’s something embarrassing about George?” He threw his hands up as Ron and George began hitting him with pillows.

“Er...once, when dad was having over people from the ministry for a Christmas party, he ran into the room naked! Ahh!! Stop Fred!!”

Everybody laughed hysterically. George glared at everyone and continued his pillow assault on Harry.

“When was that?” Harry gasped for air from laughing so hard.

“Last summer!” Fred shouted.

“I was four you prats!” George yelled.

“Oh good, I was looking for a good story to write to Kota about!” Harry laughed.

“You wouldn’t!” George gasped.

“Well, unless you become my body guard!” Harry offered. George froze thoughtfully and swung his pillow, this time hitting Ron in the stomach.

“Hey!” Ron yelled.

“You’ve got a deal, Harry! Instead, you can tell her about the time I battled a dragon on a broomstick in front of the whole school!”

“That wasn’t you, you prat, that was Harry!” Ron squeaked as he tried hitting George back.

“Details, details little brother,” George said, forcing Ron to back up away from Harry. Harry jumped to his feet but Hermione was gone. When she reappeared from the girls’ dorms, she announced that the camera was hidden. He began to dart after her when somebody cleared their throat. Everybody froze and looked up to find practically all the boys in the Gryffindor tower watching them. Colin Creevey had another camera up and was snapping pictures. Girls were now tromping down the girls’ dorm staircase as well, stopping at the bottom with glares.

“Some of us were trying to sleep in,” Lee Johnson said with a glare.

“Yeah, it’s a bloody Saturday!” Dean moaned.

“Er, sorry,” they all murmured. Fred put Ginny down and the twins took dramatic bows. Everyone trudged back up to their dorms. George and Ron put the pillows back on the couch. Ron tossed Harry his blanket with a smirk.

“So did you two have a good time last night?” he asked evilly.

“Oh shut it Ron, we didn’t do anything,” Ginny said with a roll of the eyes. “We’re just friends.”

“Right,” Harry said with an emphasizing nod.

“Oh so you just happened to meet down in the common room in the middle of the night,” George said sarcastically.

“So that’s why you were so jumpy last night, Har,” Ron said mischievously.

“No,” Harry said with a glare.

“So what were you two doing down here snuggling up on the couch?” Fred asked.

Harry and Ginny looked at each other and sighed.

“The ghost girl,” they said in unison.

"You mean Moaning Myrtle? What has she got to do with anything?" Ron asked.

"Not Moaning Myrtle, the demon-ghost girl," Harry said as if it was the most obvious thing in the world.

"The one who murders people in horrifying ways, hiding in dark corners and such, just waiting until people like you and me look the other way before hacking them to death and hanging them from ceiling fans," Ginny clarified.

"Yeah, if you're lucky, she'll just get you quickly. The drawn out ones are just gruesome," Harry said with a shrug.

"She strikes in the dark so we figured we'd go to the fireplace for some light."

"We figured you guys could fend for yourselves if she came."

The Weasley boys looked pretty frightened now. Hermione sniggered.

"What?" Ron squeaked.

"Oh, look at the time, better get dressed," Ginny said and went up the girls' staircase. Hermione trailed after her quickly, no doubt ready to hear the inside tale of exactly how Ginny's night was.

"Oh don't worry guys, she only comes out at night," Harry said before heading up the boys' staircase.

"Wait Harry, what are you guys talking about?"

"Wait, who's going to hack us to death in the night?"

"Sorry, guys, really must run. I'll put in a good word for you when I write to Kota today, George," he called.

"Thanks Harry! You're the best!" George called back.

“Wait, who’s going to hack us to death?” Ron asked.

Harry just laughed and went to take a shower.

June first came swiftly. Ron woke that morning dreading that the day had come. He felt an ominous feeling, knowing that his best friend was supposed to die before the end of the month. It was enough trying to focus on his O.W.L.s without wondering how much longer he’d have with his friend. Sirius had been visiting Harry more and more often. Professor McGonagall had been caught on a few occasions staring down at her sick student tearfully. Ron even swore he once saw a sympathetic gaze from Snape. All in all, he took it as a bad sign. They were all signs that there was no hope and that the end was near.

Ron walked over to wake Harry, something he had to do most every morning now since Harry was so tired all the time.

“Oi mate, time to wake up,” he called, ripping back the bed curtains. Harry was lying on his side, his back toward Ron. He made no reply so Ron shook his arm gently.

“Mmm...go ‘way Ron,” he mumbled in a strained-sounding voice. His body shook in painful-sounding coughs. Ron winced sympathetically. He shook Harry’s shoulder again.

“Sorry, Harry, but it’s a school day.”

“Please Ron, no,” he moaned shakily. Ron sighed sadly and began to pull Harry toward him, onto his back.

“Harry, I’m sorry but you have to...” Ron trailed off, his words catching as he inhaled sharply.

The spot on Harry’s pillow where he had been laying was covered in blood. There were still a few drops at the corner of his mouth as well. Ron looked down and saw that the lower arms of Harry’s nightshirt were soaked with red, since, as always, Harry had been coughing into his sleeves. There were spots of blood all over his shirt where he

had either coughed on or brushed his sleeves against. There was even some in Harry's hair, where he had laid his head in the blood on his pillow. As Ron's hand rested on Harry's shoulder, he felt that Harry was shivering. Small beads of sweat covered his face, which was contorted in pain.

"Oh Merlin," he gasped.

Harry struggled to open his eyes. They were filled with extreme pain.

"I really don't feel good," he whimpered, swallowing hard. He abruptly sat up in bed, clutching his head as it pounded in agony.

"Harry?" Ron asked, concerned.

"I'm going to be sick," he gasped before scrambling out of bed.

Ron raced around the bed to Harry. Halfway out of the room, Harry's legs gave out and Ron had to catch him as he fell, wrapping his arms around Harry's chest and slowly lowered him to his knees. He helped Harry lean against a wall and raced to grab a trash can. He thrust the can at his friend who promptly began to violently empty his stomach. Ron grabbed a blanket and draped it over Harry's shoulders, rubbing his back comfortingly.

As Harry retched into the wastebasket, Neville came back in to find them. In seeing Harry, his eyes grew wide.

"Neville, get a wet washcloth, quick," Ron ordered, not wanting to leave Harry's side, especially now that blood was coming up too. Neville nodded and raced out of the room.

After the last of Harry's dry heaves subsided, he leaned back against the wall to catch his breath. Ron grabbed a shirt off Seamus' bed and handed it to Harry to wipe the sick off his face. After doing so, Harry looked at what he was holding.

"I don't think Seamus is going to appreciate that," he commented, his voice hoarse from all the coughing and vomiting.

"It'll teach him not to leave his things laying around," Ron said.

Neville burst back into the room with Hermione trailing close behind. She was biting her bottom lip and looked extremely anxious.

"Oh Harry!" she exclaimed, rushing over to him. "Oh God, you're covered in blood!"

Neville pressed the wet washcloth against Harry's burning forehead. Harry was clenching his teeth to try and relieve his pounding headache. He was swept with a sense of vertigo, feeling as if he was going to fall.

"Need to lay down," he murmured, beginning to do so on the floor.

"Wait Harry, we're going to get you into bed, okay?" Ron protested. He and Neville lifted Harry to his feet and helped him back to his bed. The two boys exchanged a worried look as they both felt how hard Harry was shivering despite the heat of his skin.

"Mione, grab my pillow off my bed, this one's covered in blood," Ron requested. Hermione swiftly switched out the two pillows as Ron and Neville eased Harry into his bed.

"I don't think I'm going to go to class today," Harry said in his raspy voice.

"Of course you're not!" exclaimed Hermione who was pulling Harry's blankets up to his chin. Neville put the washcloth back onto Harry's forehead.

"I'll be right back," he said softly to Ron and Hermione. "I'm going to fetch Madam Pomfrey." He slipped out of the room.

"Ron, give him some of those potions Snape gave you!"

"No, Mione, he said not to if it seemed worse than a fever unless..." he trailed off, thanking Merlin the situation didn't call for the emergency potion that Snape had given them. The two sat down on Harry's bed on either side of him.

"Tell us what to do for you, Harry. What do you want?" Hermione asked, compulsively smoothing Harry's hair back from his face again.

"I'm all right guys, really. I'm just tired," he murmured, eyes drifting closed.

"Okay, just go to sleep then. It'll be all right." Hermione chanted, her face full of fear.

"Wait, no Harry, just hold on until Madam Pomfrey gets here. Just stay awake until then, okay? You think you can do that?" asked Ron. He didn't want to let Harry go to sleep only to find out that he should have stayed awake. Plus, he remembered from Potions class that potions were more effective and quicker when ingested rather than injected, which was why it took so long for the potions to work the last time.

Harry weakly nodded his head. "I'll try, but I don't know if I'll be able to."

"We'll keep talking to you to keep you awake," Hermione suggested. Harry nodded.

"Just think Harry, twelve more days of school and we are out of here," Ron nearly shouted as Harry's eyes began closing.

"Yeah, and think, no more Dursleys. You'll be living with Sirius!" Hermione interjected.

"And Mum's already said that you and 'Mione can come to the Burrow. We're going to have a blast. We'll experiment with the tricks from Fred and George's shop and we'll play tons of Quidditch."

Harry smiled at this, though his eyes remained closed. "Sirius said he has a pitch," he muttered, pausing for a deep, shuddering breath. "Maybe you all can come over to his house."

“It’ll be your house too, as of this summer,” Hermione reminded him. “You never referred to the Dursley’s house as yours, but now you can with the Black house. Why don’t you give it a try?”

Ron looked at Hermione with a raise eyebrow. She shrugged. Harry smiled amusedly and chuckled.

“All right, you can come over to my house this summer.” As silly as he felt uttering the words, he couldn’t help but smile, liking the way they sounded.

Suddenly, waves of nausea swept through his stomach and as he tried to repress the urge to vomit, pain shot through his whole body. All the windows in the room shattered with a loud crash. He gasped and grabbed his stomach. The motion upset his head and he once again felt as though a hammer was beating against the inside of his skull. His whole body tensed up and he began to shake slightly. A whimpering moan escaped his lips.

Ron and Hermione watched helplessly as Harry grimaced and shivered violently, trying to bite back the pain. Ron noticed Harry’s fists clenched so tightly, he was worried he would cut himself with his fingernails. Ron managed to wrench his hand into Harry’s and squeezed back, trying to let Harry know he was there. He looked at his friend in undisguised worry. Hermione stroked Harry’s cheek and murmured comforting words.

Finally, it passed as Harry managed to relax slightly. Ron felt Harry’s hand slacken in his own. Harry laid his head back down on the pillow, taking in agitated breaths. Hermione adjusted the washcloth on his forehead.

“Harry?” Ron asked frightened.

He looked around at the broken glass and closed his eyes to concentrate. Ron and Hermione watched in amazement as the glass lifted off the floor like upside-down rain, flew into the window frame, and reformed the glass panes. He opened up his eyes again and looked up at his friends.

"Keep going," he said weakly, shivering violently. Hermione grabbed another blanket and draped it over him. He thanked her with a feeble smile.

"Er...well at your house this summer you can show me that wicked trick you pulled in the match against the Hufflepuffs. That won us the match!"

They heard the bells chiming, signaling for students to get to their first class. Harry frowned.

"You guys should go before you're late. I'll be fine," he said in an unsteady voice.

"No way, Harry, we're not leaving you. You're way more important than school!" Hermione insisted. The corners of Harry's mouth turned up at this extreme compliment, because to Hermione, there were precious few things more important than school.

Once again, Harry's body tensed up, the pain and nausea almost overwhelming. He felt bile starting to rise up in the back of his throat and swallowed it back hard, agitating his already raw throat. He felt Ron clenching his hand and looked up into the redhead's eyes. They were filled with emotional pain and were brimming with tears, a look of pleading apparent in them. Pleading with Harry to be okay, to just jump up and be the healthy Harry he had been at the beginning of the school year. Unfortunately, that was one thing Harry couldn't do.

Ron noted that this time, even in the worst of his pain, Harry couldn't clench his hand as strongly as he could the first time. He longed for the bone-crushing squeeze from before, because without it, Ron could feel how Harry was weakening.

Finally, it passed and Madam Pomfrey and Neville arrived, arms laden with potions. Madam Pomfrey was unusually somber, simply giving Harry the necessary potions without commenting on their frequent meetings. She thanked Ron for his foresight to keep Harry awake.

"All right, Harry, you can go to sleep now. We'll wait awhile to see if we're going to need to move you into the hospital wing. I'm going to send up a house elf to watch over you in case you need me and I'll check on you again in an hour," she said soothingly, wiping away the blood on his sheets and pajamas with a flick of her wand. Harry barely nodded before his breathing evened out.

"Madam Pomfrey, you don't have to call a house elf, I'm staying here with him," Hermione announced. It was not a request but a statement.

"Me too," Ron said.

"Same," Neville nodded.

The medi-witch looked unsure though. "I don't know about pulling you all out."

"Don't worry, our professors will understand. Besides, I'm a few chapters ahead and I'll teach Ron and Neville the lessons we'd be learning today so we don't get behind," Hermione said. Ron and Neville nodded.

The nurse looked sadly at their concerned faces. She nodded.

"All right then, I'll alert your professors." She quickly explained the potions on Harry's nightstand to them and instructed them to get her the second something even seemed wrong. She cast a final mournful glance at Harry before leaving.

"Merlin, poor Harry," Neville said quietly looking at his friend shivering in his sleep, waiting for the fever-reducing potion to kick in.

"I hate to admit this, but I'm getting really scared now," Hermione whispered in a frightened voice. "He said the latest would be the end of the month, but it could really happen any day."

"Don't, Hermione," Ron said angrily with a shudder. "Harry's strong, he'll make it to the end of the month. Probably passed then even. We'll probably get to celebrate his next birthday."

Hermione and Neville exchanged a quick look.

"Just don't give up on him," Ron practically whispered, looking not at them, but at Harry's bloodstained pillow that Hermione had thrown on his bed in her haste to switch the two. "He's counting on us to not give up. If we give up hope, then he will too. And hope is all we have right now."

"I won't give up on him, Ron. I promise," Hermione said quietly.

"Me neither. I swear it," said Neville.

"Good," Ron said quietly.

"Well, shall we start on our lessons," Hermione suggested cautiously. To her immense surprise, Ron and Neville both sat on a bed facing her, getting out their quills and parchment.

"Yeah, let's do that," Ron said in a hushed voice so not to bother Harry. Hermione quickly recovered from her shock and began teaching the two their last chapter in History of Magic.

"Severus, you wanted to see me?"

Snape looked up from the paper he had been furiously scribbling notes on to find the headmaster standing in the doorway of his living area. The potion's master was surrounded by large books and pages upon pages of sketches, notes, and lists of potions ingredients.

"Albus, please have a seat," he said gesturing to a chair, moving the books that had been stacked on it.

"I must say, Severus, this is the messiest I have ever seen your quarters," he said with amusement.

"I take it you've heard that Potter and his friends were not in class today," Snape said, ignoring Dumbledore's previous comment.

"Yes, I've spoken with Madam Pomfrey. Harry's condition is declining rapidly," he said sadly.

“Well, I’ve been researching the boy’s condition. The spell, cancer in Muggles, previous cases with this spell, cures that have been tried but failed. I’m working on some theories. Har—Potter’s magic has strengthened to such a magnitude that, if we were able to somehow...er...disconnect the cancer from his life energy, it is very likely that his magic will push it out of his body. The question, of course, is how to do this without harming him, or doing it period for that matter,” he said, eyebrows furrowed in concentration, looking through notes and gesturing with his hands.

Dumbledore had seen the potions master speak with determination and passion whenever working on a new potion, but this intensity was beyond anything that the headmaster had witnessed. The headmaster smiled slightly in seeing the usually extremely composed and meticulous man finding it difficult to even string together his thoughts. The man suddenly looked so natural, so human, a side of him that most would never see.

“I’ve broken down a few potions that break magical bonds somewhat similar to this and think that with some experiments, I might be able to isolate the ingredient or combination of ingredients that would be most effective here. And if I combine it maybe with something from this list,” he said, handing a list ingredients to Dumbledore, “it might get closer to what we want, though I’m not sure if it will even be safe to drink. I don’t even know if it will work or what the side effects might be. Anyway, Albus, the reason I asked you down is to request that for the next few weeks, somebody cover my first through fourth year classes so I can work on this. Obviously I need to work quickly and my younger students are hopeless anyway. So are most of my older students for that matter, but I don’t trust anyone else to teach those classes with the advanced classes and so close to the O.W.L.s for the fifth years, not that most of them will even pass, but that’s beside the point,” he rambled.

Dumbledore put up a hand to stop him. “Of course I will have someone cover your classes. I will do it myself if I can’t find someone else, though, as you know, potions is definitely not a strong area of mine.”

Snape huffed in agreement.

Dumbledore looked around at the mess. "You do realize, Severus, that you have come to actually care about someone," he said with amusement. "And not only somebody, but Harry Potter, your old enemy's son."

Snape glared at him. "I do not. I am only intrigued by the condition and finding a potion that might cure it. I am not concerned with that boy. He means nothing to me."

"Your actions betray you, Severus. It's written in your eyes." He sighed. "It's a wonderful thing, to care about someone. It makes you human."

"Not someone who is about to die," he said stiffly. He looked up at the headmaster with a sadness he could almost completely hide. "Life disappoints, Albus. If you allow yourself to become emotionally involved, the disappointment becomes hurt." His tone changed as he realized he was actually speaking of his feelings. "Of course this is purely hypothetical. As I said, I don't care for that boy. I don't get emotionally involved with anyone, and especially not with an arrogant little celebrity."

"You know Harry better than that, Severus." Albus rose from the chair and brushed his robes straight. "I will begin asking about substitutes for your classes immediately." He nodded at the potions master and made to leave. As he passed the couch, he rested a hand on Snape's shoulder.

"I wish you would believe me that the benefits of caring about someone outweighs the risk of hurt, but you can only discover this on your own."

With that, Dumbledore left, leaving Snape to briefly ponder his words before turning back to his notes. He would rather die than admit it to Albus, but the hope for Harry that was beginning to show made him long for Harry to live more than he had wanted anything in a very long time. He had tried so hard not to care about anybody. How this had happened, he would never know.

* * * * *

Disassembly of Reason: Dumbledore does have that strange way of knowing things. He figured out what was going on pretty quickly and, because he's cool and knew what Cho was doing, went with it. Lol, that would have been hilarious if it had been Snape. About Cho and Cedric, sometimes people aren't as perceptive as Harry when they're involved with someone like Cho. He probably believed that she really did like him and then ignored all the red flags that are so apparent to everyone else who isn't emotionally involved. When you have a crush on somebody, it's easy to ignore bad things about them. Merlin knows it's happened to me several times before. Cho was just referring to the Weasley's financial status. Whether or not she's prejudice against Muggleborns, I don't think she would really pay attention to that stuff, it takes some perception, that she doesn't have, to be able to tell who actually is Muggleborn, since they all look alike. Lol, you may have been proud of Ron's restraint on teasing Harry last chapter, but I guess it got to the point where he couldn't resist. Plus, the twins are a bit of a bad influence :) (I love them!) Neither movie was real, though the demon-ghost girl was based on the girl from the Ring.

Dadaiiro: Really? Yay!! Thanks!! I'm so happy I seemed to catch a lot of people by surprise with the Ginny taking revenge on Cho thing. Dumbledore knows all that happens in Hogwarts, well sort of. I think he just figured it out really quickly and let it happen. He's just cool like that! I know what you mean about fifth book Harry. He was so moody and took out his anger on his poor friends. I love scary movies! I'm glad you're for George/Kota. I honestly wasn't even going to do anything with them beyond her going ga ga over George, but everyone seemed to want more and voila: the dance, which worked well to work with the wishes for the Stensons to find out about the cancer. Can't get enough of your telling me you love my story! Not to sound conceited!!!!

PussyKat: Yeah, I must say, I hate the love triangle thing too. It's just too sad and I can't picture anybody doing that to their friend. But anyways, yeah, H and G won't start dating because then I would have to write about them going out together, and it's just not fun like that. I

know what you mean. I don't think either Ginny or Harry are the type to bluntly ask the other to a movie, they're a bit too shy. Well, maybe Ginny would have when she was younger, but not anymore. And Harry's just too clueless about girls, which is adorable. I'm glad my fic remains a bit unpredictable. Thanks! I love responding to reviewers! I'm glad its appreciated! I am in love with Harry too! Of course, I imagine him slightly different than he was in say the fifth book? Too moody there, but he was depressed! You can't blame him all that much, can you?

Thundering Lights: Sorry! I totally understand weeks from hell, and know how horrible it is when it prevents you from reading fanfiction! It's so frustrating! I'm glad you found your cat! I'm sorry Cho wasn't as bashed as you wanted. Just pretend that Ginny tackled her and beat her down. Lol, Harry reincarnated into an animal? Sweet, though probably not the angle of the story. But hey, you never know. Maybe this fic ends with him coming back as a bird and crapping on Cho's head. Unfortunately, for me, this story is coming to its end somewhat soon. I mean, it's already June!

Eowyn of Ithilien: Are you serious?? Well, J.K. better be lying to throw people off or there's going to be a serious smackdown!! HAHHAHA!! Cho/The Giant Squid????? Aahhhhh!! That's the most hilarious thing ever!!! How would that even work? LOL. Anywho, I imagine the Slytherins wrapping their arms around themselves or pulling their cloaks closed or grabbing the tops of their pants as if afraid she'd pull them off. All right, you can have the Giant Squid as long as I can have Kreacher! Now that is one sexy thang!

Terence: Well, I'm so glad you're finally feeling better! It's so freezing in here. But apparently the heater must be the devil or something. My finger tips are slightly blue since I had to take off my gloves to type. Sad, huh? I think so, but I guess the rest of my family doesn't understand my pain. They're crazy. Or maybe just cruel. They probably all secretly have the heater on in their rooms and are laughing maniacally while they make my room like an arctic vent!

Luinlothana: lol, of course I'll read your reviews!! I love them!! Ginny did the potion on her own, using the beginning of Fred and George's of course. I don't think I could see her asking Snape for help with a

prank. I mean, who in their right mind would? Lol. How long will it take for Harry to calm down? Well, I'm sure by day he'll be fine, it's just in the dark of the night when it starts to get scary. After seeing the Ring, I was totally fine until in the middle of the night, I somehow convinced myself that Samara was in my room. I ended up pretending there was a lot of people with me and then called "I really hope you would have better things to do than kill me," in a really casual voice, as if that would make her go away. Then I jumped in and realized it was empty. Yeah, I felt slightly stupid, but fear makes us act irrationally right?

Lalilo: You were the only one to take a crack at my question about the password. Actually, Bubasti is an ancient city, once the capital of Egypt, that was devoted to the worship of the cat-headed goddess, Bast. I thought it would be a fun little inside joke for Professor McGonagall to make it as if the Gryffindor tower was a city that worshipped her, since her animagus form is a cat. Hmm...chapters left? Tough question, I'd say this fic, at one chapter a week, will be finished around Christmas. It's hard to judge though since I'm still adding stuff. It could be sooner. It could be later. But there's your ballpark figure.

ParanoiaIn2005: Thank you! Lol, yeah, well scary movies can make people act irrationally. For an example, read my response to Luinlothana. Read the author's note about the movies, since it takes quite a bit of space to explain. No, the password was pretty hard, I was just wondering if anybody knew. Read the response to Lalilo, right above yours for the answer.

BratPrincess-187: I could totally imagine Hermione punching Malfoy if he went too far in insulting her friends. He really touched a sensitive spot there. She can be a very feisty girl! Well, here you go, a nice dose of drama for you!

Lindiel Eryn: Thank you, I'm glad you think so. Cho's punishment has had a wide range of responses, many who think it wasn't harsh enough. Lol, I think that for Cho, it was the worst thing possible. Ok, I sound really arrogant, but I don't mean to, really! Sweet, innocent Ginny? As in the one who lied with ease to Dean and Seamus to

keep them from the common room? Lol, yeah, she is sweet, but she's getting a mischievous streak in her as well.

Nelum: Ta da! It's Ron and Fred, and George and Hermione who find the pair! Hope that tickled your fancy!

Siri Kat: lol, yes, that is what I do during scary movies too!! I scream at them since they can be so stupid! I mean, jeez, how about calling the police or turning on the lights, or not going into the house with the killer in it? I just hope that if I'm ever in a scary movie situation (which I don't really count on) I am smarter than them.

Crystal113: Yay! I'm glad you like Snape in this story. He's one of my favorite characters to work with in this fic! I hope you continue to feel the same! Yes, OWLs will be mentioned. I'm glad you even like the type of scenes you usually don't like (romance). Yeah, I'm not a Cho fan either. Of course I make her a ton worse than in the book, but I didn't like her there either. I sometimes feel bad bashing her so horribly, but other times, I don't! LOL.

GuitarGirlErin: That's so great that your friend recommended my story! Thank them for me. Wow, I can't believe you read so late into the night! Actually I do that occasionally too, right up until my eyes burn from trying to keep them open. But thank you for doing it for my fic! I'm glad you don't find Kota Mary Sue-ish since that is one of my main concerns about the story!

Duende: Thank you! Well, this chapter was up sooner than it has been lately and it has Harry with a bad day! Your two requests! You're English was wonderful.

Heretic Angel: Wow, all 30 in one go? Congratulations! I'm glad you like it. You mean you haven't thought of Ron and Hermione getting together? No R/H fics? Wow. That's crazy. I think they would be perfect together! It's so obvious they like each other, well at least to me. Voldemort found out earlier that he and Harry have a connection when he invaded Hogwarts the first time and therefore, has been working against that connection. But he will make his appearance. Never fear.

SiriuslyObsessed: I'm glad you haven't abandoned ship, but don't worry about the chapters missed. I'll definitely check your fic out the moment I have a free...well, moment. I'm glad I took you by surprise with Ginny making the potion! Yeah, Ginny tipped off the reporter. It wouldn't be too hard, just say that Harry's girlfriend is going to make an announcement at dinner, but stay near the shadows. And of course, Dumbledore caught on and didn't do anything to stop it. Scary movies are fun. They make us act all crazy! Well, guess what, this chapter has Harry torture in it for you!! Yeah!! Lol.

Myr Halcyon: Well, I hope angst does help, b/c this chapter has some. I know how it is to go through a rough time and I wish you the best of luck with it. Anything I can do to help, just ask. HP fanfiction does help to get your mind off things though. Ginny doesn't know that Harry has cancer yet. In fact, the only Weasley who does is Ron. I've taken psych before too! Psychology of adolescents to be exact. Trying to find out what I'm thinking I guess. Lol. I hope things get better, and until then, I'll send over your pick of Harry, Snape, the twins, or any other character of your choice to make you feel better! lol

SiriusWolf: Lol, I have no idea what you mean by the Matrix reference, but you did catch on nicely to the Ring one. That's too bad that you're putting your fanfics on hold, but a novel sounds like a really cool idea. I know what you mean! College apps are hell!!

Lady Abbey Bartlet: You're welcome! Thank you so much for reading it! Wow, worship?? That may be a little strong for this story, but thank you! I know what you mean about craving stories. It's really weird! I just can't function without the occasional dose of HP fanfiction. Luckily, being the author of this fic, I can put in whatever I'm craving at the time!

Ganymede: I must admit that sometimes I feel bad for what I'm doing to Cho's character. You're absolutely right, she wasn't nearly as bad in the books. See, I started writing this before the fifth book when we didn't know much about Cho's character. She was the one I could mold into a character I wanted in my story, somebody who would bring Harry out into the public eye a little more. We don't really get to see much of the tabloid, crazed reporters and fanclubs aspect in the

book, but every celebrity has fanclubs and tabloid rumors, so I wanted to bring that out. I guess you could consider Cho as almost a different character, since it is AU and stuff. Oh and Ginny doesn't know about Harry's illness. Thank you for the ego boost!!

Not a Muggle: I'm glad you gave this story a chance. I really tried to break away from a lot of cliches, even though it starts out with child abuse and stuff. I'm so happy you ended up liking it!

Miss Shadow Prowl: Uh, a made up movie! As I said in the A/N, the scary girl is based on the girl from the Ring and the one from the previews for Gothica, but the bits of plot you saw were just random figments of my imagination spurred from too many years of watching horror flicks.

Chibi-Bex: Yes, in this fic Cho is a major bitch! (I hate her in the books as well, but my friend, who really likes her, has sort of convinced me that she's not THAT bad. I still don't like her, but she's a lot better than in this story!) I'm so happy it's kept you entertained.

I-like-chickens: Awesome penname! Thank you! "it's like wow?" Lol, yes!! Thank you so much for the wonderful compliments!!

Bulldogchick05: Thanks! Yeah, I did think that Cho losing her reputation would be her absolute worst nightmare. I love scary movies! The Ring is one of my favs, even though it scared me shitless.

Shawn Pickett: Don't think I'm going to go into much detail about Cho's punishment. I think the imaginations of the readers of this story can come up with something far worse than I can, as I've seen throughout the last few chapters. Hahaha. But, maybe I'll put in a little comment about it somewhere if I can find an appropriate place for it.

Viskii: Good question about people worrying that Harry would get sick at the movies. Well, I guess they either didn't think of it. Every day that Harry has gotten majorly sick, he's started off the day feeling bad, and he was having a good day that day. On the other hand, maybe they were worried about it, but knowing that he only has a limited time

left to live, didn't want to deny him a chance to have some fun. Pick whichever explanation you like better. :) Unfortunately, I can't answer your other questions!! Sorry! You'll find out eventually though! Glad you liked the Cho scene!

Maximum Poofy-Pissed Off Queen: Lol, I know what you mean. I get stuck in the slash groove a lot, since I can never find good H/G fics! There are just so few and a lot of them are horrible, while there are so many good slash fics! But, I still love H/G and think they'd be so cute together. (Especially fifth book Ginny. They were sooo flirting when Ginny brought him the easter egg in the library! Okay, well maybe not, but that's not the point.)

Also thanks to: rosie (Thank you! Nah, the reporter was just tipped off by the little redhead demon lol), Jedi-Bant, jo0609, ckat44 (Thanks, I'm glad you liked I all. You'll just have to see what happens), fantagal(procrastination power!), GabiAnne, Pennypacker (Thanks! I'm glad you liked it. Um, maybe they'd say cheese still, but then when the picture was snapped, all the other cheeses would be looking around to see who called their name. Lol), Cestrel, EriEka127, Mickeymoose, PhoenixPadfoot89 (the author's note explains the movie thing. H/G forever!), "crystal, lily, james and sirius", ArcticWolf2 (can't tell!), Romm, Tristen-Potter, to the windows to the walls and Kay (hey, I'm glad you found my story too!! Thank you!)

Lol, I really should cut back on review responses. They're almost as long as the chapter!! Hahaha, well, maybe not. They're fun! I'm so freezing right now!!

Author's Note: I apologize in advance for the brevity of this chapter. I tried breaking up the scenes in several ways to try to make it longer, but it just didn't work. The next chapter, I assure you, will be much longer and will further the plot more than this one. But I couldn't bear to cut any of these scenes out so I hope you all don't mind the little unexciting, non-dramatic chapter.

Right now, I am incredibly sore from my little learning to snowboard escapade of the last few days. I spent half the time just trying to get up after I fell. It was really fun though and I am proud to say I made it down the bunny-slope twice without falling. Of course I did also totally crash into this girl while coming off the chair lift, but it was really her fault. I tried to apologize help her up and she slapped my hand away and scowled at me! I didn't feel too bad for knocking her over after that. I tried to do this dignified sort of walk away, but being that one of my feet was strapped to the board, I promptly fell over and sort of crawled away. I don't think my friends are ever going to let me live that one down.

Harry was in and out of sleep the rest of the day. Despite the potions he had been given, he still felt pretty miserable and weak. Neville, Ron, and Hermione stayed with him the whole day, embarrassing Harry to no end with taking care of him.

"Harry, don't be embarrassed. You're sick. You are allowed to be taken care of for once in your life," Hermione said as she cooled the washcloth on Harry's head again.

"I'm not embarrassed," he muttered.

"Then why does your face turn red each time we try to help you?" Neville piped in, with a raised eyebrow.

"Because I'm hot," he insisted.

"Ah, you're not that hot," teased Hermione, insinuating that Harry had been referring to his looks. Harry blushed even brighter while Ron and Neville just laughed.

"Can't I just take off some of these bloody blankets?" he whined.

"Only if your temperature gets too high. The heat is actually good for you though, Har. The reason your body's getting a temperature is because it's trying to reach a heat that any bug you might have gotten can't stand, so it will kill it off, and since your immune system is weak, you'll need all the help you can get," Ron explained. Everyone looked at him in surprise.

"How do you know all that?" Neville asked.

Ron blushed a bit.

"Well, I've done a lot of medical research lately. I've read through those books so many times, I guess some of it sticks with you," he said with a shrug. "Besides, it's kind of interesting."

Harry couldn't help but feel slightly guilty for all the work his friends had gone to on his behalf. Luckily, Hermione quickly prevented the situation from becoming awkward and gasped in fake shock.

"No! Not you Ron Weasley. It can't be true. You? Finding something you read—in a book—interesting? It must be someone under a Polyjuice Potion, not my boyfriend!"

"Hey, why do you get to call me your boyfriend and I don't get to call you my girlfriend?" Ron asked indignantly.

"Because when I say it, I don't make you sound like a brainless object. No arguing," she said, putting up a hand to stop him.

"Girls," Ron sighed in exasperation. Neville and Harry nodded knowingly.

Later that night, Neville went off to study with Eloise and explain to her what had happened. Harry was still slightly feverish and, though temporarily awake, seemed ready to fall asleep at any moment. They had told their dormmates that the trio had all been slightly sick, and Neville had stayed behind to take care of them, since he insisted he

was too bad at acting to pretend to be sick. Hermione and Ron had changed into their nightclothes before class had gotten out to make it more convincing. Everyone believed them, assuming that the trio had once again been sneaking around outside in the middle of the night on one of their adventures and had probably caught a cold.

At dinner, Ron went down to the kitchens to get some food for him and Hermione, and some chicken broth for Harry. The house elves, especially Dobby, were very obliging and Ron considered going down to the kitchens for dinner more often. Not only did he get anything he wanted, but Dobby praised him the whole time. Toward the end, it got slightly awkward though, and he grabbed the bundle of food and left swiftly.

He had just gotten through the portrait to the empty Gryffindor common room, when he heard his name being called. He turned around to see Fred and George scrambling through the portrait after him.

“Oy little brother, I heard you were skiving on classes today,” said Fred.

“With Harry, Hermione, and Neville Longbottom,” added George.

“What’s going on?”

They simultaneously crossed their arms as Mrs. Weasley did when waiting for an answer.

“Er...”

He couldn’t bring himself to lie to his brothers about something like this. He wanted to tell them so badly, just to have someone besides Hermione to talk to about it. But he also knew that he couldn’t possibly be the one to tell them. Even if it wasn’t only Harry’s to tell, he couldn’t have brought himself to deliver such horrible news. He did not envy what Harry was going to have to do as soon as he got well enough to have the conversation.

“Hey, Ron, what’s wrong?” Fred asked worriedly at seeing the distressed expression on his little brother’s face.

“I...er...well, it’s nothing. Well of course it’s not nothing. It’s something, but I can’t...I can’t...” he trailed off, trying to get a grip on his emotions. The twins exchanged a worried look.

“Ron, tell us. Maybe we can help,” George said comfortingly, resting a hand on Ron’s shoulder. Ron looked at him with sadness in his eyes.

“I wish you could. I promise, you’ll find out soon, just not right now,” he sighed.

“Does this have to do with Harry?” George asked with deep concern.

Ron numbly nodded. “But don’t ask me about it right now, and don’t go spying on him or anything. He’s going to tell you very soon,” he pleaded.

“What about now?” Fred asked.

Ron shook his head. “He’s a little sick right now,” he said sadly. “I promise, he’ll tell you soon.”

“Wait Ron, does it have to do with You-Know-Who?” Fred asked with a tinge of fright in his voice.

“Please, don’t go off into anymore of those save-the-world escapades. It was horrible when Ginny...” George trailed off. They both knew he was referring to the Chamber of Secrets. “I don’t want to have to go through that again with any of you, okay?”

“It doesn’t...it doesn’t have to do with...him,” he said with a bit of a shudder. “But please, don’t ask me, okay? You’ll find out soon,” he promised.

The twins reluctantly nodded.

“We’re holding you to that, Ron,” George warned.

He nodded and made his way quickly up the stairs as the twins went off to dinner.

Ron quietly opened the door in case Harry had fallen asleep again, to find that he was still awake, though barely. He and Hermione were sitting up in Harry's bed, leaning against the headboard. Harry's head was resting on Hermione's shoulder while she read to him.

They looked up as he entered, giving him quick smiles before turning their eyes back down at the pages. Harry didn't have his glasses on, so Ron wondered briefly why he even bothered. Hermione continued to read aloud a description of what sounded like a very hideous witch who had obviously been in several magical accidents. The two chuckled at the description, which Ron thought was slightly mean, since the poor witch had to be quite misfortunate to have gotten green skin.

He set down the food on Harry's nightstand, handing Hermione a biscuit and Harry a thermos of chicken broth, each thanking him quickly before going back to giggling at what Hermione was reading. Ron squeezed in next to Harry, sandwich in hand, throwing only the top blanket over his lap, while sitting on all the rest.

"What are you guys reading?"

"It's a Muggle fiction book that my aunt sent me for Christmas. It talks about what Muggles think witches are like, the stereotypes for them. They're quite funny actually."

"Yeah, did you know that I thought all witches had long noses with warts all over them until Hogwarts?" Harry said with amusement.

"And green faces, like in the Wizard of Oz," Hermione pitched in.

"Green faces and warts?" he asked incredulously. Then his expression turned thoughtful. "Actually, that kind of sounds like my Aunt Mildred." They all laughed.

“And Muggles generally think of witches as evil. Turning people into frogs, eating little kids, and constantly making potions for evil purposes.”

“Eating little kids? Well, there’s a whole different side to the female population of Hogwarts that I’ve been severely misinformed about,” Ron muttered jokingly. “And doing potions all the time? No wonder people say Muggles are crazy. Only someone truly insane could think of actually enjoying potions. Where do they get this stuff from?”

“Stories and movies and stuff. ‘Hansel and Gretel,’ The Wizard of Oz, Disney movies, all the stuff we’ve seen or heard since we were little,” Harry explained before remembering Ron had no idea what he was talking about.

“Hansen and Grendel? Who?” Ron asked, very confused.

“All right, Ron, it’s time for a little Muggle culture lesson. Story time,” she said, closing the book with a smack and setting it aside.

“Yay! Story time!” Ron joked, while Harry clapped his hands eagerly. They all dissolved in fits of laughter.

“That’s right, boys, story time. First, let’s get you tucked in,” she said with a smile. The two boys chuckled and scooted down until their heads were lying on the pillows. Hermione pulled the blankets up to their chins, which was slightly difficult since Ron was lying on top of half the covers that Harry was under.

“All right, once upon a time, a long time ago, there was a brother and a sister named Hansel and Gretel,” she started in a soft voice.

“Is Hansel the girl or the boy?” Ron asked.

“The boy. Gretel was his sister. Anyway, one day...”

When she finished the story, which had only been interrupted by a sharp gasp from Ron (“She was going to EAThim?!”) and a comment from Harry at the part where Hansel was getting fattened up by the witch, (“Hmm...sounds like Dudley.”), she started onto the description

of the witch from Snow White and the Seven Dwarves, which, because of a very curious Ron, led into the telling of the whole story.

The rest of the boys came into the dorm later in the middle of her stories and, after settling into their own beds, began to listen as well. She laughed and said they reminded her of the lost boys from Peter Pan. Dean and Harry chuckled, while everyone else remained puzzled. She shrugged and began telling that story, even if it strayed from her theme.

By the time she had gotten through The Wizard of Oz ("Melt under water? Muggles are so weird," murmured Seamus through a yawn.), all the boys, including Ron and Harry, had fallen asleep. Hermione was barely awake herself and had no energy to go back to her own dorm. Half asleep, she slipped under the covers beside Harry and fell into slumber.

The next morning, the three woke to a bright flash followed by chuckling. Each of them groaned and glared at Seamus who was standing at the foot of the bed with Colin Creevey's camera in hand.

"Aww, how cute, the three class-skiving sickies," he cooed.

"Sorry guys, couldn't let there be no proof of the fact that Hermione not only spent a night in the boys dorm, but stayed in a bed with two blokes," Dean added.

Hermione groaned and chucked a book at them. Ron gave her a sleepy high five over Harry.

"See you three at breakfast," they laughed and left the trio to finish waking up.

The three continued to lay in bed, too comfortable and tired to move.

"How ya feelin' Harry?" Hermione asked in a part whisper since her voice had yet to fully kick in.

"Mmm...much better, just not quite awake yet," he murmured with a sleepy grin.

"I ran into Fred and George last night. They wanted to know why we had all missed class," Ron said.

"What did you say?" Harry asked, though not caring as much at the answer as he would have if fully awake.

"Said that you'd tell 'em soon. You really have to, Har."

"Mm'kay," he murmured.

"Really?"

"Yeah. You're right. I'll tell 'em."

"If you need us, we're here for you," Hermione said sympathetically, turning on her side and propping her head up with her hand.

Harry smiled at her. "Thanks 'Mione."

There was a long comfortable pause.

"I wonder what your dormmates are going to say when they find out you spent the night in the boys' dorm," Harry said with a grin.

"Yeah, 'Mione, you should...enhance the story, for entertainment purposes," Ron added with a mischievous grin.

"Nah, I'll just tell them nothing happened. That's the best way to put their imaginations at work," she said with a chuckle.

"First punching Malfoy, now this? I think you're becoming worse than Harry and I. Soon, you're going to be a bad influence on us," said Ron in amusement.

"Well, I'll start being a bad influence on you after O.W.L.s. are on Monday. Good thing it's a Saturday. We can study all today and tomorrow."

Ron and Harry rolled their eyes and groaned.

"Two weeks of tests," Ron moaned miserably. "That's torture, that is."

"Well, what would you rather do: have two weeks of tests or two weeks of detention with Snape?" Hermione asked.

"All right, you win. I'd take the tests any day," Ron admitted miserably.

"No way, I'd go for the detention with Snape. That's far better than two weeks of tests," Harry argued.

"What if it was two weeks detention with Lockhart?" Hermione asked.

Harry made gagging sounds. "Bring on the tests. Of course we all know what you'd pick 'Mione," he teased. Hermione scowled at him.

"What are you saying, Harry? Choosing between Lockhart and tests? That's like asking her if she'd like a pile of gold or a pile of diamonds."

"Hey, shut it you two! I'm not so keen on him ever since it came out that he hadn't done all that stuff he had said.

Ron cleared his throat and waited, but Hermione only raised an eyebrow.

"And what about the fact that he tried to steal our memories and drive us mad?" Ron said in exasperation.

"Oh, well you couldn't really blame him for that now could you?" she asked innocently. The two boys pulled faces at her and finally got out of bed. They walked with Hermione down to the common room just to see if any of her dormmates had noticed her absence the night before, and sure enough, the common room was occupied by several very excited and anxious-looking girls.

When they saw Hermione walking down in her pajamas from the boys' staircase, they burst out into whispers and giggles. Parvati and

Lavender raced over, each grabbing one of her arms and practically dragging her up the girls' staircase, Ginny racing up behind them.

Ron and Harry laughed and went back up to get showered and dressed.

The weekend was extremely hectic, with long, intense study periods along with tutoring Neville and Eloise. Everyone was more serious about studying than ever before, and Harry made sure that they all took breaks every time he could tell the stress was getting a bit too much.

Once Eloise burst out in tears saying that she would never understand Potions and was going to flunk out of school because she was so stupid. Harry and Neville gently reminded her of her A that she had gotten on the test, which cheered her up. They went down to the kitchens and drank hot chocolate with cookies until they were relaxed enough to go back to Potions.

Ron and Hermione had dragged him to see Madam Pomfrey Saturday morning and she gave him several potions with instructions to start taking them daily. Throughout the weekend, he realized that he was constantly feeling weak now, though surprisingly, his powers were staying as strong as ever. Unfortunately, using these powers drained him of energy he hardly had in the first place and he therefore refrained from putting them to much use. He had lost his appetite almost completely, much to the dismay of his friends.

What was truly plaguing his mind, however, was the seemingly impossible task of telling the Weasleys about the cancer. Saturday night, he couldn't find Fred and George, and even though Ginny was in the common room, he wanted to tell them all together, so couldn't that night. Sunday night, he found them, but they were surrounded by books and looked stressed. They did have N.E.W.T.s starting the next day after all. Harry kicked himself for waiting this long to do it, since now the stress of his bad news would only add to the stress of their exams. He decided to wait until the beginning of the following weekend, so the shock of his announcement would be eased by the weekend before they had to go back to their tests.

He passed the idea to Ron, who reluctantly agreed that Harry had a point.

“Okay, as long as you don’t let worrying about telling them mess you up on your exams,” Ron said.

“Don’t worry, I won’t,” Harry said. Both of them secretly knew that it wouldn’t matter how Harry did on the tests, but it was never said aloud.

Monday came, bringing their first O.W.L. test, the written portion of the Defense test. Everyone was extremely nervous. Neville nearly had a nervous breakdown when he realized he had forgotten his quill as they were passing out the tests, but Hermione, who had brought eleven just in case, let him borrow one.

When the test was actually in front of him, Harry’s nerves were eased. The questions were things that he easily knew. He had thought that the questions were going to try to trick him or be on things he hadn’t learned about, but he was certain about the answer to every single one. He knew he might have had an easier time with the test than others thanks to preparing for the Tri-Wizard tournament the year before and his extra defense lessons this year, and felt slightly guilty about the extra advantage.

The practical exam on Tuesday, was also easy for Harry. He seemed to be having a far easier time than the other students around him, but all of the spells in this portion of the exam, he was sure they had learned in class.

Wednesday and Thursday brought the written and practical portions of the Potions test. Harry thanked Merlin he had tutored Eloise and Neville, since he might have forgotten several of the potions if he hadn’t. After the test, the two ran up and hugged him, thanking him profusely.

“The examiner that was testing me said she was impressed,” exclaimed Neville. “Snape was right there and he looked like he had swallowed a Bludger.”

“And my potion turned out looking exactly like it should and he asked what I would do if I wanted to disguise the taste, and I knew! I said I would add Boomslang skin before the Knoxwood, and he nodded and said ‘very good’,” Eloise said excitedly.

“See, I told you guys you could do it!” Harry said with equal fervor.

Ron came out grumbling a bit at the three happy students. “Why didn’t I join your study group? Why?” he groaned. “I don’t know what went wrong, but it was green at the end. It dripped on the table and made it really shiny. The examiner reckons I invented a new magical wood polish, but since we were trying to make a truth-telling potion, I think I’m screwed.”

Neville patted him comfortingly on the back. “Well, on the bright side, you might not have to take potions next year,” he reminded him.

But Ron’s mood didn’t brighten as much as they’d hoped. In fact, he looked even more depressed.

Hermione bounded up to them energetically. “How do you guys think it went? I think I did well. It turned out like it should have I think.”

“Oh Merlin, I’m the only one who failed,” Ron said dejectedly.

“You don’t know that you failed, Ron. Maybe your potion is a wood polish and a truth serum,” Harry said hopefully.

“No, I’m just a royal idiot.”

Hermione immediately quelled her overly joyous antics and hugged Ron.

“No you’re not. Would I ever date an idiot? I don’t think so. Maybe potions just isn’t your thing. I think you’re much better in charms,” she said.

Ron seemed to forget all the mishaps in charms that year and smiled. “Really?”

"Of course!" she said brightly. "Not that you should slack off for the charms exam next week. I'd say study extra hard so you can show off."

All the boys rolled their eyes.

"Hey, it's true! You should all study this weekend! I'm not...hey! Oh shut it you buggers. Eloise is obviously my only true friend here, so us girls are going to go down to the kitchens for an ice cream and pie celebration without you lot."

She linked arms with a giggling Eloise, and the two marched off toward the kitchens.

"Ice cream?" asked Neville.

"Pie?" said Ron.

The three raced after the girls.

"Severus."

Snape jumped and whirled around, nearly breaking a beaker full of volatile acid. He glared as the headmaster raised an amused eyebrow.

"Albus, do you not have anything better to do than sneak up on people?" he asked, turning back to his experiment.

"I just wanted to check on your progress and make sure you eat. The house elves are setting up your favorite meal in your living room and you're going to take a break to eat it," he said sternly. "I know how you get with your research."

With a slight scowl, Snape put out the fire and set down the beaker. "I'm not a child Albus," he said indignantly. His stomach chose that moment to growl.

"Yet you still cannot manage to feed yourself," Dumbledore said with a smile. He put an arm around the potions master's shoulders,

knowing he was the only one who would ever be allowed to do such a thing, and led him out into the dining room.

The two sat down at the table and Snape raised an eyebrow at the feast before him.

“You went overboard again, Albus.”

“Overboard is a very interesting place to be. It’s much less confining, wouldn’t you agree?” he said thoughtfully. Snape simply raised an eyebrow, not quite sure what exactly it was he was supposed to be agreeing to. “So, how is your research going?” Dumbledore asked, cutting his pork chops.

“Well, I think I’ve figured out how to isolate the cancer and remove it, but not without it damaging the life energy. I think I’m on to something though. It’s all in theory though and it will be very difficult to test it,” he said with a frown. “By the way, who did you get to fill in for my classes last week?”

Dumbledore’s eyes twinkled merrily. “Well, I took over a few, when Sirius was busy getting his house ready for summer. There’s a lot of work to be done there since it hasn’t been lived in for so long and he needs to fix up a room for Harry,” he said casually.

Snape blanched. “Sirius Black? You got that—that man to teach my potions class? Are you insane? He probably only taught them how to turn people’s hair different colors or some other horrid prank. Oh no. Please tell me my classroom is in one piece. Oh dear Merlin,” he said horrified.

“Severus, though Sirius’s talents in potions will never nearly match yours, you must admit he is more than competent in the subject. He just finds different joys in it than you do,” the elder man said calmly.

“Joys such as blowing things up and making people miserable,” he muttered, stabbing his own dinner viciously with his fork.

“I seem to remember a few potions you made as a student with some interesting side effects as well,” said Dumbledore amusedly.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Snape said, trying to conceal a smirk.

There was a long pause.

"Severus, do you think you might be able to save Harry?" Dumbledore asked seriously.

Snape sighed. "I don't know Albus. If I can get this potion right, it'll be close. I'm working as fast as I can. The longer he can hold on, the better chance I'll have to get it out of him. Of course, even if I do, his immune system will most likely be damaged, but he'd be able to live with it."

"Well that's more hope than we've had." He grinned with amusement and Snape knew what was coming. "You know Severus..."

"Albus, don't even start it," he warned.

"Start what?"

"Start telling me that it's obvious I care for the boy and that this is good for me and I need to stop being a lonely, grumpy, isolated bastard and start reaching out and all that usual crap you try to spoon feed me," he said, exasperated.

"Actually, I was just going to say that you should try the mashed potatoes, but I'm glad you're starting to admit all this," said Dumbledore with a twinkle in his eye.

Snape glared daggers at him.

"I do not care about him. I am just trying to find the cure as a little project. It's a new challenge," he said, matter-of-factly.

"Then I guess you wouldn't care about what Poppy told me about his health," Dumbledore said with a shrug, taking another bite of mashed potatoes.

“No, I don’t care,” Snape said indifferently. There was a long pause while he seemed to be having an inner struggle. Finally, he looked up in defeat. “Fine, what did she say?”

“Well, if you don’t care, I wouldn’t want to bore you with the details.”

“Albus,” Snape said warningly, “stop trying to be manipulative and just tell me.”

Dumbledore laughed slightly before sighing sadly. “He’s beginning to have to take potions on a daily basis and she fears that may need to be increased soon. She says that his immune system is beginning to lose the battle against the illness, and his health will soon start declining even more rapidly. She doesn’t think he has much time left, even with all the potions he’s on.”

Snape shook his head and slammed down his fork. “It’s not fair, Albus. You know, I overheard the Weasley boy saying that Potter stood up for me against his friends. He stood up for me. Nobody—nobody does that, except for you. After everything I’ve done to him... Is this his punishment or something? Is this my punishment? It’s just so ridiculously unfair,” he spat.

Dumbledore sighed. “I wish it weren’t so, but life has its unfortunate twists. Sometimes evil prevails and the best people are dealt the worst of fates. In Harry’s case, his goodness led him right into this horrible mess.”

“It was his choice, but it was our faults. We conditioned him to believe that it was his destiny to face the Dark Lord. He’s just a child. He must’ve believed that it was his destiny to die, since it must seem to him impossible to win. Maybe he was right,” Snape said angrily.

“It is not up to us to decide people’s destiny. There is still time, and because of you, there is still hope.”

Snape sighed and leaned back in his chair. “So I guess it’s down to me. It’s resting on my shoulders now.”

“Severus, you’re doing more than I ever hoped for. Whether or not this works, you’ll still be like a son to me. Do you understand that?” Dumbledore asked seriously.

“Oh bother. Here comes the sappiness...” Snape started with a roll of the eyes.

“Severus, I’m very serious. I want you to understand that. I’ve recently discovered what could happen when somebody doesn’t believe that there’s somebody who loves them. I don’t know what I’d do if that were to be you,” he said sincerely.

Snape looked at the older man awkwardly. “I understand, Albus. Thank you.”

Dumbledore gave him a sad smile. “I best be off,” he said, standing and waving away his dishes with a flick of the hand. “I want you to start taking care of yourself. That means eating and sleeping as actual humans do. I’ll come and check on you, and I don’t want to see any under eye circles or hear any growling of the stomach,” he said sternly. “Take care.”

“You too,” Snape said. Dumbledore then disappeared out the door, leaving a thoughtful Snape behind.

The potions master called a house elf to clear away the food and returned to working on his experiments, for some reason, with even more determination than he had before.

A/N: The bit about Sirius taking over the potions class was in honor of Catiechan since it was her idea!

Dadaiiro: Sigh. No they aren’t. Yes, I feel sorry for Harry’s friends with all this stuff. Not sorry enough to write a less angsty fic, but still, the sympathy is there. Sevvie has plans, hopefully this chapter made it a little more clear what they are. Lol, did you expect Sirius to take

over the class? I figured he'd have to be decent at potions for pranking purposes. Well, I guess you'll have to see what's in store for everyone!

Storie lover: Never fear, I have not stopped writing! Nor will I stop writing before finishing this story. Thank you so much! I'm glad you like my story!

Anora: lol, oops, well, I hope you didn't die in the time it took me to update. (I know it took me a long time. Sorry!!!!) I'm so happy you like it though! Can't believe you read it so quickly.

Sondy: Really? Who's author's fav list? I'm so glad you like it!! Stay tuned for the answers to all your questions!

Samara-chan: Ooh, I've got you hooked. Yes! My evil plan is working. Um...can't tell you about Harry's death. As I've said, Harry and Ginny will not become an item in this fic, they just can flirt with each other for awhile lol. That's so cool you're in a band! Lol, yeah, after the fifth book, I wasn't too fond of Cho anymore. The Ring does rule!! That's so awesome that you have the same name, though she does freak me out a bit.

Rhinemjr: Really? Wow, thank you!! I didn't think a lot of people really liked it so I'm ecstatic that you liked it so much!! Me? A real author? Wow, thanks. When I read that, it honestly brightened up my mood so much you can't even believe. I did a definite victory dance.

Stormy1x2: Yay! So glad you like it! Lol, I love H/D as well, but I doubt I'd be able to write it for my life. There's something addicting about slash fics though, I must say. I like doing H/G since, besides liking the pair, think that there's a severe lack of good H/G fics out there. Not that this fic will go any further with the relationship, but yeah. Lol.

Isa: Seriously? Wow, I did the exact same thing with the fifth book since I thought it was going to be Neville! I started crying cause I didn't want him to die. And then I found out who it was and cried even harder! (I must admit I was thinking about how it would affect fanfics,

but I was also sad for Harry and stuff!) lol, I'm glad you'll like either ending, and I'll see what I can do. Wink wink. Lol, don't look too much into that. I'm just feeling goofy.

Velith: I solemnly swear I am up to no good...no wait! I mean I solemnly swear I won't abandon this story. I know how you feel! All my fav authors do that all the time, so I decided I would finish any fic I start, including this one. So voila! You will get a finished story!

Wiccan PussyKat: Cool username! Me like! I wasn't so good about updating soon this time. Sigh. Sirius won't be in the next chapter. :(But he will be back in a few more chapters! :) Right, can't think of anything more to say, so hope you like the chapter!

Catiechan: I am so sorry about your friend. I know how you are feeling, at least to some extent since my friend had cancer last year. It's very heartbreaking. Thank you for the idea of Sirius taking over the class! I made sure to put that in since I thought it was absolutely fabulous. Poor Snape. I'm pretty sure that's not who he intended to take over his class. Lol, you should get together with Wiccan PussyKat and start a little Sirius club. You could get little flags that say "We Want Sirius" and wave it as I write the chapters! Hahaha

Thundering Lights: Yeah, I wasn't sure if it was "passed" or "past." I'm hopeless with those things. Well Eloise was back here! Fred and George don't know yet, but as Harry said, he's telling them soon. I'm glad you read the author's notes! Bloody plot line indeed! It's not even much of a line, more like a squiggly thing lol. Keeps going random places on me! You know, I really think I am going to write another one. I have a bunch of ideas and have written bits of stories already, but I'll have to take a bit of a break, probably over winter holiday, and write one out. When this one's over, I'll discuss any further stories with my readers. Yes, Snape was saying that he might be able to cure it. I guess I should have made it a little more obvious. Lol! Yes, Kreacher is, I'm sure, a sex god among house elves. Congrats on your license!! I'll make sure to watch out for any crazies on the road (i.e. YOU! Hahahaha)

SiriKat: lol, yes, Snape is drenched in denial!! Will it last forever? We'll see. I'm glad you liked the playful scene along with getting

emotional at the angsty one. Good reader (pats you on the head. Lol, j/k)

Black Cobra: Thanks for reviewing to all three chapters! It's find that it's in one review. Lol, yes, blackmail is a wonderful tool that every child should know. Lol, Cho, I'm thinking one last bit of humiliation should do, not even a huge scene, just a little thing. Yeah, that would be freaky to wake up to. We'll have to see what Snape can do.

SiriusWolf: Cool, I'm glad you like the Snape and Dumbledore scenes! Er...well we'll see what Snape can do. That's so cool you're doing that poetry contest! Good luck!!

Terence: Hey, I haven't talked to you in forever! I'll probably drop you an email when I update this. Hahaha, yes, that is a tiny little insignificant detail, right? Lol. School is absolutely beyond horrible right now. Right, talk to you soon!

Corbin: *Takes a deep bow and blows kisses* Thank you! I'm glad you think it's a bit original. I really try for that. Um...I can't really say on the chapters, but I think it'll be done around Christmas? Maybe. Lol. I don't really know. That's a major guestimate. Selectively different, eh? I love it!! Chris? Is that the male or female version of the name? That's the most hilarious story ever! Embarrassing people is a wonderful past time. Live it large!

Duende: Happy Birthday. It is the 28th right now so I'm rapidly trying to post this for your birthday!! All in good time, young grasshopper, all in good time.

Fay Stone: Really? You were crying? That rocks!! I mean, that's so sad. Lol. I'm glad you're emotionally involved. :) I'm so stoked for the HP3 movie, the teaser is far too short.

Bulldogchik05: I'm glad you liked the beginning scene. Snape really isn't such a git, in my opinion. He's just got a few problems that he really needs to sort out one of these days. Lol, yes, those two movies do come very close to what I was going for. Good call. Lol, thanks for the lovely compliments!!

Paranoialn2005: Thanks, emotionally charged is what I like to hear! Doesn't quite fit this chapter, but maybe next one. Yes, I hate it when Snape becomes all overbearingly caring in a blink of an eye. I think he's a bit too complicated and proud for that. I mean, he's just too stubborn for that. You're right! That was a definite screw up on my part with the whole "Madam Pomfrey" instead of "Poppy" thing.

Viskii: Yay! I'm glad you liked the chapter! Well, next chapter should be the Harry tells the Weasleys scene. Not all the teachers know. I'm sure a select few do, but they really want to keep Harry's illness hushed up since it would be very bad if it got out into the public, especially to any Death Eaters or worst of all, Voldie. I'm glad you liked the second bit. I feel a bit bad about torturing Harry like that, but I explained to him that it's necessary for the story. He still thinks I'm evil at the moment, but he'll come around I'm sure. Dumbledore handing out poisoned lemon drops...hahahaha!! That would be the greatest twist in the books, wouldn't it? Voldie's actually not that bad, it's really Dumbledore who kills everyone by offering them poisoned candy! Muahaahaha!! Yeah, they definitely don't want to get anybody's hopes up with something that could so easily not work out. Be patient. All in good time. Thank you for the wonderfully long review. Split personalities make life so interesting, don't they?

Chibi-Bex: Yes, the trailer rocked beyond all belief. The randomness of the kids singing with the giant toads was beyond awesome. The real disappointment for me though was Lupin. First, it doesn't even show him in the trailer, but if you look up pictures online, he looks creepy! I hope they're just bad pictures. Anywho, yes, Harry is taking a turn for the worse. Will he get better? We'll see. Lol. Yes, without Harry, there really is no point to anything really!! Thank you very much!! Fred and George are the best ever. I want to marry one of them. I call Fred!!!

BratPrincess-187: Sorry, you'll have to wait another chapter! As for Voldie/Harry scenes, you'll have to wait and see!! Lol. I must be extremely annoying for my vagueness.

Bill: Thank you so much for the review. You lifted my spirits with that bit of info and speculation. I really really hope you're right!!!

PhoenixPadfoot89: Really? Wow! Yay!! I'm so glad you liked the chapter so much!! Lol, and have Simon in the background saying "Now don't take it personally, but you're the most horrid singers I've ever heard in my whole life! It was like a thousand knives in my brain!" and then, all the students will sick their random giant toads on him. I'm glad you read the Author's Notes!! Thank you for that!

Angel74: Thank you!! I'm glad you think it's realistic. I know some people are anxious to get passed the little every day scenes to some exciting stuff, but I like showing that the characters are human too and their lives don't always revolve around Dark Lords and Basilisks. Also, those are the scenes that I use to develop my characters a bit. I'm glad you appreciate them! I'm so happy you're addicted to this story!! Wow, you're all time favorite? Thank you so much!! I'm really honored.

Ckat44: Lol, yes there is hope. I'm sorry you're feeling sick, though I'm sure you're probably better by now. Thank you for the wonderful compliments! I'm glad you're involved with my story!! I hope it stays that way!!!

Mell5: Yes. I'm one of the truly blessed to have seen Snape in grandma clothes. Thanks for reviewing!! I really love reviews! I'm so happy you like Kota. She makes me a bit nervous. And yes it is George who has a crush on her. And Eloise!! I'm so glad you like her! I felt so bad for her in that scene in the book and I thought she deserved some time to shine. That's so fantastic that you like so many aspects of what I've tried to do with this fic! Thank you so much! I hope you continue to like it

Myr Halcyon: That's great that you actually read my author's notes! Can't wait til the HP3 movie! Thank you about the simple comedy thing. That's really nice to hear since I think a lot of people would rather me skip over those bits and get to the exciting stuff. I did want to get in other character's perspectives in this fic, since I think it's very important for what I'm trying to do. I'm glad you like it!! Snape is the best!!

Firemask: Oh my God!! I can't believe you're still here!! Honestly, I thought you'd abandoned long ago and it made me so sad!! I'm so

happy you still like it. Jeez, you've been with this fic since practically the beginning!! Well, Snape's in denial, so his reasoning really doesn't make much sense. Ron's family will find out soon. Though they are nosy, I doubt they would ever suspect something like this. Besides, people tend to ignore things they don't want to see. So glad you're back!

Ratgirl: Lol, really? That's so awesome!! I do that all the time with fics!! Make up endings and sequels! Unfortunately, I usually do that when I should be listening in class. I love it! That's actually a really cool ending, leaving it open for a sequel that would be very interesting. Thank you for that! That makes me so excited that you're into my fic enough to think about the possible endings!

SiriuslyObsessed: Yes poor Harry. I feel bad for torturing him like this. Not bad enough to stop, but hey, that's life. Right, um...I know, Snape's reputation is at definite risk here! (Keep an eye out for a line about that next chappy!!) I'm glad you liked that little line! Yes, I will definitely give your fic a read. I promise. It's just been a bit hectic lately, so I haven't been able to get much fanfic reading in, but I will!

Also thanks for the lovely reviews from: Crystal113, EriEka127, Nameless thingamebob (Thanks for the recommendation! I'll definitely check it out when I have some time.), Ashes7, Lady S, Heretic Angel (I might be. What's a Round Robin? Lol), H.5 (no, but it's on the agenda for next chapter!), jo0609, Waterlili (Thank you!), LadyLilyPotter (lol, um, a couple of months is a bit of an exaggeration, but it has been over a week. But I'm glad you like it and that you cried!), Lindiel Eryn, Kathfire (All in good time.), hoosiergirl, Maximum Poofy-Pissed Off Queen (Thanks! Snape's the best!), Embroglio (ok, I'm scared now. Lol.), Miss Shadow Prowl, o Hell o Kitty o, Jay-Jay (That's awesome! I'm glad I made you feel like that!), Blackenedsoul (hey, you never know.), Arctic Wolf2, Cestrel, "Crystal, lilly, james and sirius", Shawn Pickett (Lol, you'll just have to see!), fantagal (HAHAHA!!! I laughed so hard at the first line of your review. I really am torturing him, huh? Snape is definitely starting to like Harry, he just doesn't know it really. He's in denial, poor thing.), Nelum too lazy (yes, I do say Merlin knows! I'm glad that made your day. Finding Nemo rocks!), Rain Warrior, Leigh, Wynjara (lol, inspired? I love it!), GabiAnne, Formerly Known as Erin, Tamora Pierce, Midoriliem,

Centrau guardian (I just got your review. I'm so glad you like this story!! I'm very sorry about your mother. I know many people with cancer or who have had cancer. It's hard, I know.)

Author's Note: Hey all! Over 900 reviews?!?!?!!!!! You guys rock my world!! If I break 1000, my sister and I are going to have a dance party, with just the two of us and some nice celebration virgin strawberry daquiris. Life is very hectic and tiring right now, but I wanted to give you this chapter as something to think about until my next update. *evil grin* I spent practically the entire day yesterday, other than at school, at the library doing hideously boring research. A total of 5 hours of looking up old court cases and such trying to prove my thesis. Lol, you guys are such terrific reviewers. You always start asking the appropriate questions right about when you're supposed to. I am so hyper right now, in this inexplicable good mood. I've been having a solo dance party to just plain weird songs. Let's see, I wish I had something more interesting to say, but I don't, so, on with the chapter!

* * * * *

Finally, it was Friday, the day he had promised to tell the rest of the Weasley kids about the cancer. That day they had their Care of Magical Creatures test, which only consisted of a written exam. For once, Harry was able to see that Hagrid's lessons were not completely random spiels on magical creatures that he found interesting, but had actually been preparatory for the O.W.L.s. He nearly laughed when he read the question: How should a person approach a Hippogriff and what will cause one to become angry?

He didn't get very far into the test when he began to feel ill. Luckily, Professor Lupin had been one of the exam proctors and had noticed Harry's shivering and the grimace of pain on his face, and realized what was going on.

He came over and knelt by Harry's seat. "Harry, let's get you to the Hospital Wing, okay? The test isn't important. Hagrid already knows you're a good student."

Harry started to protest, but a dizzy spell reminded him that he didn't want to faint in front of the entire fifth year class. He nodded and shoved his quills into his pocket. Lupin escorted him out, handing in his exam on the way out. Many students glanced up curiously, but quickly went back to their tests as the given time trickled away.

Harry's friends watched him worriedly, but he gave them a reassuring smile before going out the door.

Lupin brought Harry to the Hospital Wing, but Madam Pomfrey was at a bit of a loss. Harry was already on fever-reducing potion, but his immune system was failing and without its help, potions were no longer working as well or lasting as long.

"There's nothing you can do to help him?" Lupin asked, casting Harry a sympathetic look as the boy lay on his usual hospital bed. Madam Pomfrey shot a glare at him.

"Remus, if I knew what to do, don't you think I would be doing it? He's on so many potions all ready and I'm not an expert with his condition. If you want to help, go call Severus. You can use the fire in my office," she said sternly. Remus went to her office to execute her orders. She sat on the edge of Harry's bed next to him. Her expression softened as he smiled weakly at her. "Now you did take your potions this morning, right dear?"

"Mmm hmm," murmured, nodding his head slightly. "They've been working fine up until now. I must be getting really bad," he said lightly, but Madam Pomfrey could easily see the fear on his face and it broke her heart. Unfortunately, she couldn't find any comforting words.

"I'm sorry, dear. I wish I knew more about this, Harry, so I could help you. Professor Snape will be here soon and hopefully, he can have some answers with potions questions."

"Don't apologize, Madam Pomfrey. I knew when I did this what it would be like. If it wasn't for you I'd have been in pain for a lot longer."

She cooled off the cloth on his forehead and readjusted it. Harry murmured his thanks, still slightly embarrassed to be taken care of. Madam Pomfrey noticed a look on Harry's face, as if he was debating whether to say something or not.

"Harry?" she asked to prompt him. He looked down at his fidgeting hands.

“Umm...well, I was just wondering, honestly, do you think I’ll make it until my birthday? I mean, I know I said July, but with all the potions, it might turn out differently than it would have with Mr. Stenson. You can be honest with me. I can take it.”

The nurse looked down him and tried not to cry. The way things were looking, she wasn’t sure he’d make it until July.

“Yes. You can make it until then. You just have to believe that you can and you will.”

Harry looked up at her hopefully. “Really?”

“Really.”

He flashed her a huge smile. “That would be great. I’ve always wanted to have a real birthday, you know, with a cake and candles and people singing the song.” He looked off dreamily.

“And presents,” she added.

“Presents?” he asked with a slightly confused look. Then he shook his head. “No, I don’t need presents.”

Lupin walked back in with Snape right behind him, having floored up from the dungeons, arms laden with bottles of potions.

“I just spoke with Sirius. He’s going to come and see you tonight after he finishes some things with the house. With the way he’s working on it, it’ll be a palace by the time you get there,” Lupin said with a light chuckle.

“He won’t tell me what he’s doing. Tell him not to get carried away. He won’t listen to me,” Harry said amusedly.

One of the test proctors came in and told Lupin that they needed him to come back. He looked reluctant, but Harry insisted that he’d be fine and there was nothing to worry about. Lupin instructed him to

feel better and then slipped out the door. Meanwhile, Madam Pomfrey had filled Snape in on the problem.

"I don't know if I can give him any more potions without risking further damage, Severus. I'm lost with this," she explained. He nodded and sighed thoughtfully.

"More fever-reducing potion is out of the question. Too much will poison him." He paused in thought and began flipping through some potions books that Harry didn't think were from the library. He stopped on a page and sighed, tapping the page. "We can try an Aegis Potion. I'm not sure how effective it will be, but it's really the only thing we can do right now. It will cause fatigue and possibly dizziness, so it might be best if you stayed in bed for the rest of the night, Potter."

Harry's face fell. "Isn't there anything else? I'm already tired all the time, this will just make it worse. I don't want to be sleeping the rest of the time I have left. I'd rather just stay as I am," he pleaded.

"Potter, if there were anything else, I'd tell you, but this is all I can think of at the moment. It should help fight this for a brief period of time, giving your immune system a rest. Your body can't keep fighting this on its own," Snape insisted apathetically, not looking at Harry. For a fleeting moment, Harry swore he had detected a hint of sadness in the professor's voice, but realized he must have been hearing things.

"But I was going to go flying with Ron tonight," he said sadly. "And Sirius is coming. I can't sleep through that. Can't I take it tomorrow?"

"If you don't take this potion, you'll probably collapse anyways, Potter. Your friends and Godfather will understand, but you need this," said the potions master coolly, turning to his potions ingredients and sorting through them.

Harry sighed and looked longingly out the window at the Quidditch pitch.

"Well, dear, I'm going to go look through some of my books to see if I can find anything to deal with this loss of appetite you said you've been having. I'll be back in a bit," Madam Pomfrey said gently before disappearing into her office.

Snape began to brew the potion. He kept opening and closing his mouth and was thankful Harry was looking the other way. A part of him wanted to start conversation, and a part of him just wanted to remain the detached professor. He didn't even know how to start a conversation with the boy. He cleared his throat and Harry turned to face him expectantly.

"I saw your potion for your O.W.L.s. It was an Outstanding," he started casually.

"Really?"

"Yes. Your examiner said you made it with ease and answered the bonus question correctly. That's good enough to make it into Advanced Potions, the hardest class to get into in the school. Your marks have really gone up."

Harry grinned at him awkwardly. "Thanks Professor."

"It's not a compliment, it's a fact."

"Er...right. That would have been cool to take potions next year. I think I was just starting to get into it," he said with a hint of sadness to his voice. His eyes looked into space. "It's so strange to think that I'll never be going to another class here." He seemed to snap back to reality. "At least your class will be easier, I guess, without Malfoy and I fighting and trying to blow up each other's cauldrons," he said with a smile that didn't quite reach his eyes.

Snape stirred the potion with a frown. Harry was right. There would never be another potions class with Harry Potter in it. There would be no one for him to blame for every little mishap. No one to heckle mercilessly. No one to secretly watch over, like he had been doing since finding out about Harry's home life.

“Potter,” he said softly, not looking up from his potion, “whatever you may think, I have never wished you dead. I don’t hate you and...er...you would have been a...er...great asset to my...um...advanced potions class,” he said quickly, wincing at the awkwardness of the words. He had said “er” and “um”! Like a nervous little first year who was stumbling over answering a question. He supposed he was a bit rusty at giving someone a compliment. He didn’t think he’d try it again soon. It was far too bizarre and embarrassing.

There was a long silence as Harry stared at the potions master curiously. “Thank you, Professor. That—that means a lot,” he said sincerely.

Snape did a rapid heating spell on the potion, followed by a cooling one.

“Don’t get sentimental on me, Potter. You’ll ruin my reputation,” he growled. Harry stared at him momentarily before laughing.

“Oh yes, I can see the headlines now: Potions Master Actually Human. What would you do?” he laughed, a part of him hoping he wasn’t overstepping any boundaries, another part not really caring. What could Snape do to him at this point anyway?

Snape scowled at him, secretly suppressing a snigger. “I resent that, Potter,” he said, but the amusement in his eyes let Harry know not to take him seriously.

“What else is new?” Harry joked. Snape started pouring out some of the potion into a glass. “Oh no, now he’s going to poison me,” he sighed dramatically.

“You bet, Potter. This will slowly and painfully turn you into a Slytherin,” he said with a smirk, hardly believing that he was actually joking around with someone, especially Harry Potter.

Harry smirked at him. “You know, I was almost put into Slytherin. The Sorting Hat wanted to put me in there.”

Snape froze and looked at him in disbelief. "You? The Golden Boy of Gryffindor? In Slytherin?"

Harry shrugged. "That's what it said."

"Why did you not end up in my house then?" he asked curiously.

Harry smirked. "I met Malfoy. He said he wanted to be in Slytherin, so I figured it must fit him. He was pretty awful, so..."

"Draco is not awful, Potter. You should quit being so judgmental about him," Snape interrupted sternly.

"Well, he's acted pretty awful to me and my friends," Harry argued. "I'm not saying he's the epitome of evil or anything, but he acted arrogant to put me off him right away." He decided he better change the subject. "Anyways, that's why I begged the Sorting Hat to move to its second choice."

Snape stopped scowling, remembering that from what he had overheard throughout the years, that Harry was right about the blonde Slytherin's behavior. Snape thought about the idea of Harry being in Slytherin. He was vaguely impressed, and slightly disappointed. He hadn't considered Harry being in Slytherin before, but the idea wasn't all that crazy. He secretly thought that Harry would have been really good for the Slytherin house and the students in it.

"Well, that is definitely one of the most interesting things I've heard in a while," he said, vaguely wondering why the headmaster had never told him.

"Yeah, I sometimes wonder how different things would have been. Whether I'd have had the same friends. Whether the same people would have hated me." He subconsciously glanced up at the Potions master, causing Snape to feel a slight pang of guilt.

"It would definitely have made things interesting," he commented. He handed Harry the glass. "Drink this bit up. You can't take too much at one time, so I want you to take this now and then the rest at, let's

see, five o' clock. It has a few nasty side effects at first, but they'll go away quickly," he assured the boy.

Harry nodded and drank down the potion. He had just set down his glass on the nightstand when a horrible pain shot through his stomach. His whole body immediately felt like it was on fire and as nausea overcame him, he was certain he would be sick. He whimpered pathetically and gasped, trying to refrain from crying out at the pain.

He felt a relieving coolness on his forehead.

"It'll be over in a minute. It's okay. It's almost done," came a comforting voice.

The nausea and pain diminished and Harry was left shakily gasping for breath. He opened his eyes to find himself staring at a very worried looking Snape, who immediately snapped into a look of indifference as Harry looked at him. The potions master was holding a freshly cooled rag to his forehead.

"I don't like this potion too much," he muttered shakily.

"Have you been eating lately? As in regular meals?" Snape asked. Harry shook his head.

"I can't. I just throw it up," he said with a hint of embarrassment.

"Your stomach seems to be rejecting things. That's why you had such a violent reaction to the initial side effects of the potion. I don't know if you'll even be able to keep it down the next time. If you can't, you have those syringes I gave you, right?"

Harry nodded.

"Good, you'll have to just inject it, but make sure you're somewhere where you can lie down for a second after you take it, whether you drink it or inject it. It's best if you can ingest it though, as I'm sure you know. I think it's best if I also start you on some nutrient and food-supplement potions, unless I can figure out a way to stop your

stomach from rejecting food.” He paused, noticing that Harry’s eyes seemed to be struggling to stay open. “Well, how are you feeling now?” he asked with well-hidden concern.

“A lot better, actually. But tired,” he said disappointedly. “Can’t I take an energy potion?”

“No, sorry but the two don’t mix well. It might work in the beginning, but it would just run you down. You’d be awake on energy you don’t have and that’s really hard on your body. You need your sleep.”

Harry sighed and nodded, trying to fight sleep.

“I’m going to leave the rest of this potion here, since I have to get back to some research. Remember to take it later.”

“kay,” he murmured, eyes closed. His breathing evened out as he slipped into slumber, but he was still shaking slightly. Snape pulled the covers up to Harry’s chin and took off the wet rag from his forehead, gently drying off the boy’s skin with his own sleeve.

He turned to leave and froze. In the doorway, was Ron Weasley, who was staring at him in shock.

“Mr. Weasley, aren’t you supposed to be in your exam?” he asked sternly.

“Yeah, I just quit early and Professor Lupin said I could leave to go see Harry. Er...how is he?” he asked, coming into the room awkwardly.

“He’s fine. He’s going to be taking a few more potions now. He’ll wake in about an hour,” he said, a bit flustered with having been seen acting in a caring manner. All practical thoughts such as giving the boy instructions with Harry’s new medications left his mind as he swiftly exited to escape the redhead’s amazed gaze.

As Ron sat down, Madam Pomfrey walked back in carrying a few books. She nearly jumped in surprise at the sight of him.

“Oh Mr. Weasley,” she said with a small chuckle, putting a hand to her heart, “you nearly scared me out of my wits.”

He gave her an apologetic smile. “What does this one do?” he asked pointing to the new potion on Harry’s nightstand.

“It basically takes over the job of Harry’s immune system for a brief period of time, hopefully giving Harry a bit of a rest from trying to fight this thing all on his own,” she said sadly. “Unfortunately, he’ll get immune to it quickly. It’ll only be affective for a few days at most.”

A bunch of voices were coming toward the Hospital Wing doors. Madam Pomfrey quickly pulled the curtains around Harry’s bed.

Apparently, a bunch of third years had gotten into a group brawl, and were now stumbling into the hospital wing.

Madam Pomfrey ordered all the injured into beds and began giving them random potions. Ron watched in interest. She noticed him watching and waved him over.

“Here, dear, can you measure out about three milliliters of this and give it to the boy with the blond hair,” she said, handing him a potion.

Ron obeyed and handed it to the blond kid. The boy thanked him before drinking it down.

“Madam Pomfrey, how do you know what’s wrong with them without even examining them,” he asked curiously as she poured out another potion. She looked up at him with a pleased expression.

“Here, dear, I’ll show you, follow me and get out your wand.” She led him to a boy who was grimacing in pain. “All right, say Seardestrimenta as you run your wand over him like this.” She passed her own wand over the boy as if it were scanning him. “And then concentrate on finding the injury.”

“Erm, can’t you just heal me? I don’t want him doing any experimental spells on me,” the boy said snottily.

“Oh hush it, you,” Madam Pomfrey snapped. “If you get into fights, I control who heals you.” She turned back to Ron and her expression softened. “Go ahead dear.”

“Seardetrimenta,” he said as he ran his wand over the kid, concentrating like Madam Pomfrey told him. He could immediately sense that the kid had a sprained wrist and a bruised stomach, probably from being punched. He said this aloud to Madam Pomfrey who smiled and nodded. “Very good. So, we need Bruise Be Gone and Sprain Stopper, not very imaginative names, but they do the trick.” Ron measured out some of the potion for bruises and gave it to the kid.

After a few kids, Ron could do the spell with ease. Madam Pomfrey let him guess at what potions they would need and how much. He was right or close most of the time. Madam Pomfrey was nearly beside herself with excitement about a student being interested in healing.

Ron walked over to Harry while Madam Pomfrey was hustling the healed kids out of the infirmary. He raised his wand and concentrated.

“Seardetri—” he started but stopped with a gasp as Madam Pomfrey grabbed his wand hand and pulled it away from Harry. She looked slightly panicked.

“Mr. Weasley, not on Harry.”

“What? Why not?” he asked, slightly scared at the reaction from the school nurse.

“It’s his own business. Just promise me you won’t, all right?”

“Er...okay,” he said, now really wondering why she wasn’t letting perform it on Harry when he was allowed to on all the other kids.

“So, Mr. Weasley, have you considered becoming a Healer?” she asked, much calmer after Ron agreeing not to check on Harry with the spell.

"No. I mean, with Harry's cancer I've been reading a lot of medical books and I think they're interesting and all, but I never really thought about actually doing anything with it. I mean, I don't know if I'm really cut out for it, you know?" he said thoughtfully, sinking down into the chair by Harry's bed.

"I don't know what you're talking about. You seem to be great at it if you ask me. Professor Snape told me that you gave Harry an injection and Harry's told me that you're good about knowing which potions he needs to take," she said as she bustled around.

"Well, that's with Harry. But memorizing how much of which potion he should take with which symptoms is different than being a Healer," he insisted.

"Everyone starts somewhere, dear. You should consider it. What's your schedule this year?" Ron listed his classes. "You'd have to concentrate in Potions and Charms in particular, don't drop Herbology, that'll become important. Ditch Divination, that class is rubbish, and History of Magic can go. Care of Magical Creatures can go or stay, though I recommend it if you can handle it with your other classes. Concentrate in the others though, and you could definitely be a Healer if you're interested."

Ron looked down dejectedly. "Well, there goes that option. I totally messed up my Potion's O.W.L. and I haven't had the best grades in it. There's no way I'll be allowed into it next year. Wouldn't mind ditching Divination and History though."

"Well, if it's something you are serious about, I'll talk to Professor Snape for you. He and I are good friends and work closely together, so I have a bit of say with him. But I'll only recommend you if you're serious about this and will work hard in that class, because you'll be in there on my good word. You think about that, okay? Ooh, hold on one second."

She hurried to her office and a few seconds later brought out a very worn looking book.

“You can look through this if you’d like. It’s what got me into Healing. It talks about different things the job entitles, the kind of things you’d be curing, what it takes to get there, and famous Healers.”

“Thanks.” Ron took the book and began flipping through it thoughtfully.

Madam Pomfrey went back into her office.

When Ron was sure she wasn’t coming back, he set the book down and stood up. He took out his wand and placed it over Harry.

“Seardetrimenta,” he whispered, concentrating on the focuses of Harry’s pain.

He wasn’t prepared for the nearly overwhelming sense of pain that hit him. Harry was hurting everywhere! He could sense overwhelming weakness and fatigue. But what horrified him most of all was the slight sense of foreboding death. He didn’t know one could actually sense that, but he could. He immediately understood why Madam Pomfrey had to do more in depth examinations of Harry and why she was at a loss. The pain wasn’t specific. It was everything and everywhere.

Ron shivered violently and dropped his wand, breaking the connection. He shakily picked up his wand and looked at his friend, who looked peaceful in his sleep. If Harry looked so relaxed while in this much pain, then what kind of pain did he feel at the times when it showed? How could he stand it? Harry obviously didn’t let on to how much pain he was in all the time. Ron just figured it went away most of the time, but was now realizing that it was always there, Harry had just gotten used to it.

A little while later, Harry woke up. Ron handed him his glasses.

“Hey, what time is it?” he asked tiredly.

“Around 1:30. How are you feeling?” he asked in concern.

“Fine. Aren’t you supposed to be taking the test still? I thought it lasted until four,” Harry asked worriedly.

“Ah, Hagrid will understand. And if he doesn’t, I don’t need the class or anything. Don’t worry about it, okay?” he ordered sternly, knowing Harry was already feeling guilty.

“Yes sir,” Harry joked.

Ron paused. “Hey Har? Just hypothetically, not that I’m really considering it or anything, but what would you think about me being a Healer? It was just a stupid, passing idea, you know?”

“I think you’d be a fantastic Healer,” Harry said encouragingly.

“Ha ha, now really, what would you honestly think?” he said bracing himself.

“Ron, I’m serious, you’d be great! I really think so. You were great at giving me a shot on your first try, and you’re great about all the stupid potions I have to take. I could really see you as a Healer. It’s a brilliant idea!” he said enthusiastically.

They spent the next few hours talking about how Ron would become a famous Healer, bordering on superhero. Ron silently wished that the conversation could be about both of their futures.

That evening, Harry and Ron ran into George in the common room.

“Oy, you two! Ready to do some flying?” he asked excitedly as Harry had offered to let them all take turns on his Firebolt, something George had never done.

“Oh yeah, we just have to get our brooms,” said Ron with a nod toward the boys’ staircase.

“All right. Fred’s not coming. He and Angelina had to do some ‘studying,’” he said wiggling his eyebrows, suggesting that studying would be the farthest thing from Fred and Angelina’s minds.

Harry chuckled while Ron shuddered.

“Too much information,” said the younger of the two redheads. “We’ll be right back.”

The two ran up to the fifth year dorm and threw on sweaters. As Harry grabbed his broomstick, his eyes fell upon the clock. It was nearing five. He glanced over to the potion sitting on his nightstand. He wasn’t feeling very ill; he definitely felt well enough to go flying. If he took the potion, he wouldn’t be able to go.

‘I’ll be fine,’ he silently decided.

“Ready Har?” asked Ron eagerly.

Harry nodded and with one final glance at the potion, followed Ron out the door.

They flew around for nearly two hours. Harry tried to teach them how to do a Wronski Feint, but when George almost had a head on collision with the ground, and Ron nearly hit the goal post, they decided to give that trick a rest for the day. They got the Quaffles from the Quidditch shed and tried to get them past Ron, who blocked nearly every single one.

They raced each other, each time making the course more difficult: flying through the goal posts, around trees, touching the ground, and such. Harry nearly almost won, even when someone else was riding his Firebolt.

Yet Harry gradually began to feel worse. It was now nearing seven o’ clock, two hours after he should have taken his potion, and he was no longer certain that he didn’t need it.

As they ran out of ideas for races, they began lazily flying around and chatting. Harry’s head began pounding with sharp pains, but he merely clenched his teeth when not talking and pressed his fingers into his temples.

“All right, if you could ban one person, or ghost, or other creature, from Hogwarts, who would it be?” George asked from below Ron and Harry, as he lazily flied in a figure eight pattern.

“Just one? Hmm...I guess Malfoy, though there would be a few others I wouldn’t mind getting rid of as well,” Ron said thoughtfully, chewing on part of a chocolate frog he had found in his pocket. “Like Trelawney.” He said the Divination teacher’s name with pronounced malice. Though Harry had trained himself to block out all her foreboding of his death, Ron had remained sensitive to it and was always in a foul mood during and after the class. He had even told her off a few times, landing himself in detention.

“No, Cho Chang has to be the first to go. Her or Filch. It’s a bit of a tough call,” Harry mused. “What about you George?” he called down.

“Ron Weasley. Man, that kid’s annoying,” he smirked. Ron chucked the rest of his chocolate frog down at George but missed. “Filch definitely. If we got rid of him, Fred and I could get all the stuff he’s confiscated from us back. I think he must have a whole bureau full of it now. Though he did help us to reach our record-breaking detention record, so for that, I owe him thanks,” he said dramatically.

“Ah yes, the record for most detentions ever, I’m so proud of you,” Ron said sarcastically, trying to casually do an upside-down loop on his broom, but nearly falling off. Instead he climbed higher into the sky.

Harry’s head began pounding viciously, drowning out the playful banter between the two brothers. He felt something wet trickle down from his nose, and curiously touched the side of his finger to it. He pulled it away to find blood. He wiped it away with his sleeve, but a wave of dizziness caused him to grab his broom desperately. His breath caught in his chest as he coughed painfully.

“Hey Harry, you all right?” George called up, not sounding all too concerned since he didn’t understand the seriousness of the situation.

But Harry didn’t answer. Ron looked down at him with worry and called his name.

Harry groaned and pressed a hand against his chest as his breathing became harsh and erratic. Ron began flying down to him, but before he could get there, Harry's eyes closed as he slipped off his broom.

"George!" Ron screamed frantically. George gasped and immediately flew himself under Harry and caught the younger boy in his arms like a rag doll, knocking his broom down several feet.

"Ron! What the hell is wrong with him? He's unconscious and his nose is bleeding and he isn't breathing right!" George called in shock, extremely frightened as he cradled Harry's shaking body to his chest. "Oh shit, we need to get him to the Hospital Wing."

"No, fly him up to our dorm window. It's closer and we need to go quick!" Ron yelled shakily. Grabbing Harry's broom and starting toward the thankfully open window.

"Ron, he needs medical attention!" George insisted.

"George, please! Just trust me!" he called.

George nodded, fright showing on his face. The two flew as fast as they could to the window and stepped down into the room, George carrying Harry. He gently laid Harry down onto his bed and tried to wake him as Ron ran to the nightstand and desperately pulled out a vial and a syringe.

"Roll up his sleeve," he ordered as he filled the syringe with the emergency potion and tapped the air bubbles out of it, his hands shaking like mad as he tried to concentrate on what he was supposed to do. George looked at his brother in a confused awe and did as he was told.

"Ron, what the hell?" he asked. Ron just brushed him aside and knelt by Harry, who was covered in cold sweat, his breath coming in small gasps.

“Hold on Harry,” he murmured as he grabbed Harry’s arm and hurriedly swabbed it with antiseptic at the inside of his elbow. “I need more light!”

George quickly turned on the lights to the room and watched as Ron found a vein and carefully pushed the needle into Harry’s arm. As the needle entered, there was a sharp intake of breath from Harry.

“Ron, what’s going on? Please,” George begged, sounding almost tearful in his desperation to know what was happening.

Ron pushed in the plunger on the needle and slid the syringe back out carefully, immediately pressing a cotton swab to the hole to stop the bleeding. Ron shakily wiped the blood away from under Harry’s nose with a tissue.

“Harry’s sick,” he said quietly.

“No shit, Ron,” he said, clearly frightened. “But why do you know how to give him a shot? How do you even know if you’re giving him the right thing? This doesn’t look like any flu or cold I’ve ever seen...”

“George,” Ron interrupted his brother’s tirade. “Harry’s sick,” he said slowly and sadly. He looked up into his brother’s eyes, begging him to understand so Ron wouldn’t have to say it. George’s eyes went wide and he took a step back.

“Wait, what do you...what do you mean?” he asked frantically.

“He’s dying,” he said in a near whisper. George froze and stared at him with a horrified look.

“Ron, that is NOT funny,” he said coldly. “What is really going on? If this is some sort of prank, that’s really sick.”

Ron scowled at him. “Would I joke about this?” he snapped, angrily wiping away a tear. “He was going to tell you and Fred and Ginny tonight after dinner.”

“No,” George said shaking his head numbly. “No, this can’t be.”

"That's what I thought," Ron whispered, looking back to Harry who was beginning to regain consciousness.

Harry moaned and opened his eyes, looking around in confusion, his eyes finally landing on Ron.

"What happened?" he asked hoarsely.

"You fell off your broom. George caught you. I told him. I'm sorry, I know it should have been you to explain, but I had to," Ron explained. Harry looked over to George who was frozen in shock.

"George, I..." he started, but was interrupted by a wave of dizziness. "Ron, I didn't take my potion. Snape said I had to at five, but I didn't," he said weakly looking at the potion on his nightstand. Ron grabbed it along with a glass. Harry told him half a glass would do.

"Harry, why didn't you take it? That was so stupid! You could've...something really bad could have happened!"

"It makes me too tired," he explained quietly.

"So what?"

"So I wanted to go flying with you guys, and Sirius is coming after dinner and I was going to tell Fred and George and Ginny," he said, avoiding Ron's stern gaze. "If I'm not awake for anything anymore, then what's the point?"

Ron couldn't think of anything to say and helped Harry sit up. He handed the glass to Harry, but the dark-haired boy's hands were shaking so hard that Ron kept a hand on the glass, helping tip the potion into Harry's mouth.

Harry swallowed and then whimpered in pain. "Ron," he moaned.

"Are you going to be sick?" he asked quickly. Harry nodded miserably.

“George, snap out of it. Please! Grab that trash bin and hurry,” he said, snapping George out of his shocked, frozen state. The twin nodded and grabbed the bin. He ran over and put it before Harry who immediately vomited up all the potion into it. George numbly sat on the edge of the bed and rubbed Harry’s back with a shaky hand. Ron looked up at his brother thankfully as he pulled out another syringe and filled it halfway with the potion, remembering that half a glass of potion was equal to half a syringe.

As soon as Harry was done retching and had wiped his mouth on his sleeve, Ron gave him the shot. As the potion spread through his bloodstream, Harry felt the initial side effects. He bit his lip and leaned back against the headboard of his bed, closing his eyes tightly.

When it passed he looked sadly up at George.

“It’s true,” the older Weasley said numbly.

Harry nodded. “I’m sorry. I promise I’ll explain everything after dinner, when Fred and Ginny are here too. Please don’t tell them yet. I think they should hear it from me. Maybe you guys should go tell them not to make any plans after dinner.”

“I’m staying with you,” Ron said firmly.

“No, Ron, please. I just need some time to myself before this. To collect my thoughts and stuff,” he said gently. Ron nodded understandingly.

He and George got up, the latter still looking quite dazed. He had yet to completely comprehend what he had been told.

“Try and get some rest. We’ll be back in about half an hour,” Ron said.

“Merlin, this can’t be happening,” George muttered, swallowing hard.

“See you after dinner, Harry,” Ron sighed. “Don’t worry. It’ll turn out okay.”

Harry nodded and looked down at his hands as the two Weasleys left. The door clicked shut behind them. He leaned back against the headboard with a sigh. Though he felt weak, he didn't feel as tired as he had when taking the potion the first time. He realized he would probably have to have the coming conversation while lying in bed, making him look weaker than he wanted to appear.

He sighed again and began mentally preparing how he was going to say this.

Ron and George walked solemnly into the Great Hall and sat with the other two Weasleys and Hermione.

"Hey, how was flying? Where's Harry?" Fred asked. Noticing their depressed moods, he furrowed his eyebrows. "What's wrong you two?"

George and Ron looked at each other grimly. Hermione immediately figured out what was going on, her own smile deflating.

"Harry needs to talk to you after dinner," Ron said gravely to his brother and sister.

Fred's expression turned serious. "Did you find out what's been going on?" he asked his twin. George nodded numbly.

"Yes, but I think you two need to hear it from Harry."

"Hear what from Harry? What's going on? Something's wrong?" Ginny asked worriedly.

"Gin, you'll find out after dinner, just please, don't ask us questions right now," Ron said.

"I'm done with dinner," she said putting down her silverware, having barely touched her food.

“He needs a bit of time, so you’re going to have to wait,” Ron said softly. Ginny dejectedly picked up her fork and began stabbing at her potato.

“I take it that it’s something bad,” Fred said looking at his twin’s expression.

George nodded.

“Why does everything always have to happen to Harry? Doesn’t he deserve a break?” Ginny muttered angrily.

Suddenly, all the doors to the Great Hall burst open simultaneously and Death Eaters came swarming in.

Back in his dorm, Harry’s scar suddenly began to burn and he felt overcome with cold. He knew what that meant. Voldemort had arrived.

He scrambled out of bed and grabbed the energy-boosting potion out of his nightstand drawer and gulped it down. He grabbed his wand and began racing downstairs toward what he knew would probably be his death.

* * * * *

A/N: Er...are you all going to kill me for this little cliffie? Muahahahaha!!! But really, what would you all do if I decided to end the fic right here? Lol. Don’t worry I won’t!

* * * * *

Disassembly of Reason: Yes, poor Harry really needs some lovin’. Lol, not like that! The twins would have to have some brains for pulling off all the stuff they do, along with inventing so many pranks. Oh yeah! I totally forgot Seamus’ mum’s a Muggle! Thanks for pointing it out! We’ll just pretend, since it’s AU, that he’s pureblood. Lol. It would have been great if Ron and Harry had been the two to high five, but Ron’s high five to Hermione was more at throwing her book at whoever took the picture of them. (Dean or Seamus, too lazy

to check and my memory is gone.) My dad was the one to read me bedtime stories as well, of course he found it hilarious to terrify my siblings and I. Well, we all know that Harry will find any excuse to put off this conversation. Snape just decided to pop in and see how his students were doing in the O.W.L.s, taking a break from his research and such. I figured the teachers would be able to peek in if they want, and had some of them, like Lupin, be proctors for the test. I wrote all this before OotP, and don't really want to change it. Nobody knows about Snape's research besides him and Dumbledore. Snape, at least in this fic, really knows how to put on a mask in public, but I don't think he's always so proper and precise in speaking. With the few people on earth that he trust, I reckon he can let those masks down slightly. (quick note from a different review of yours) I had no idea that the word "jeez" had religious connotations. I can see it now, short for Jesus, right? I had never even realized that before!! You know, at the end of this story or something, I really should just post a chapter responding to all of your reviews! There are a few things I'd love to debate with you, but there just isn't enough room!!

Eternal Rose: Yay! I made you cry! Score for Celebony! Lol. You asked so many brilliant questions that I can't answer, but just wait and see! No, Dumbledore hasn't talked to Harry about his feelings for him, but I don't think he really will. Though he likes Harry a lot, he doesn't really love him like his friends and godfather do, at least in this fic. Hmm...I thought I was doing that with my dialogue. Well, who knows, I'm known to be sloppy.

Shinigami's best friend: Oh please fan art it!! Then send it to me!! I love pictures. I have a reader, The Ever Falling, who occasionally draws me pictures, usually for when I hit landmark numbers in reviews, and sends them to me, and I love them! I would love you to draw or paint a picture of that scene! It would be so cool to see how you pictured it! Hope I haven't totally scared you off now. Lol. Only one of my friends actually knows that I read fanfiction, but she's addicted to slash as well, but not for HP. Even she doesn't know I write it, only my sister knows that. But she's young and innocent and I therefore refrain from putting my fave slash stories on my profile, in case she ever takes a peek at my faves.

Doneril: Lol. Here's my secret: I wrote the fic before I began posting, so all I have to do between updates is make adjustments and additions and do my review responses. Lol. Yes! Hermione the new Hogwarts bad girl. Hahaha, that would be an interesting, albeit unbelievable rumor.

Myr Halcyon: You check my story every day? Wow! Thanks for the dedication! I'm so happy you like the more quiet scenes as well as the others. I mean without them, the action-packed, drama-filled scenes wouldn't seem nearly as intense. Being that you are among the few who like them, I praise you. I'm glad you think Hermione's realistic. I know what you mean! A lot of times she becomes a sex fiend as soon as she starts dating Ron. She loses her character! LoL. You miss Kota? I'm sorry, she's gone at the moment, can I take a message? I'll see what I can do for you though.

Thundering Lights: Wow good luck. All Quiet on the Western Front is no picnic to get through. Rather depressing really. Realistic though, just very gory at parts. You're asking wonderful questions that I just can't answer! But er...well, stay tuned? Lol. Yeah canon Dumbledore isn't very nice to the other houses *cough Slytherin cough*. I mean how cruel was what he did to them in book 1 with letting them think they had the house cup and then taking it away to give to their enemies? It was humiliating for the Sly's and tactless on Dumbledore's part, in my opinion. He should have added the points BEFORE the feast! Snape took a break to peak in on the OWLs. I'm sorry you're sick. I hope you feel better! This entire year for me is a huge drop in grades. Lack of motivation and all. Oh and I did have a very good Thanksgiving, thanks!

Bulldogchik05: hahaha, I unfortunately can't tell you that, but I'll let you sort of think about the potion and the ending of this chapter. Right, lol, of course Hermione values Harry more than school, she just doesn't always express it. Ron reading is a bit more of a surprise, lol, but as you can see, there was a reason for it! He's interested in Healing. Right, that was pretty obvious I guess. Anyways, hope you liked the chapter!

Lady Abbey Bartlet: Ugh, I've had some pretty hard ice skating falls, especially when my friends and I tried playing crack the whip on the

ice. I was at the end of the line and I'm pretty sure on my way down my feet went over my head. Lol! I'm glad you like my bringing out of smaller characters. I just had to give Eloise and Neville some time to shine! Don't worry, though Snape's softening a bit, it's not in his nature to be sappy. I think he'd kill himself first. Sorry about your restaurant problems. My friend loves Denny's so much he practically lives there. He knows the name of all the waiters and is planning on bringing a tent and sleeping in there. He's a bit crazy.

Pameruh qui aime malfoy: Hahaha! A she-Malfoy! That's exactly what I thought!! Lol, you sound like my friend Brandon. We always talk to each other online and joke that we're standing outside each other's windows, or have sent scary-movie-killers to each other's houses. We're very weird. Lol, are you still having the same certainty that Harry will live? Yes! Puke green hair. Just what I've always wanted!! By the way, do you speak French? I recognize your penname as French. What is Pameruh? Je parle la langue français seulement un peu, et j'ai quitté la classe cet année, mais je l'aime. J'aime Malfoy aussi! Je pense qu'il a un bon coeur vraiment, peut-être. Mais tous mes amis pense que je suis folle pour la penser. If you didn't understand that, don't worry, knowing my French abilities, it probably doesn't make sense anyways lol.

Anora: lol, I'm the same way! And usually, when it gets really intense, my computer crashes or something equally horrifying. Haha, I'm glad your wits went out the window. Well, my update's a little late, but here it is! Thanks for recommending my story to your cousin!! That's so cool!

Catiechan: Urg. Well, one of the Weasleys was quasi-told. Lol. I think I really misled everyone there, but I couldn't exactly say, "well, Harry won't actually be able to tell the Weasleys next chapter because Voldie interrupts him", now could I? It would have been really fun to write about Mrs. Weasley breaking down the doors of Hogwarts in trying to get to Harry though. Hehehe

Paranoiain2005: lol, oddity is a great virtue! Hahah just kidding. Yeah, your questions are probably starting to get answered with the last few lines of this chapter. :) My whole family thinks I'm strange because I always burst out laughing while on the computer, but when

they look at the screen, I always just put up my school website so it looks like I'm doing homework, but then there is no evidence to any sort of cause for my laughter. Lol, you should try snowboarding! Crashing into a ton of people is the fun part! As long as you aim for the people you want to run over! Lol

Terence: lol, yes Sirius teaching a potions class could prove disastrous for our lovable, greasy-haired potions master. He should teach them how to slip a potion into Snape's drink that will cause him to do a jig or something! Nah, that would be too mean, since Snape would probably become a hermit if that ever happened! Lol.

BratPrincess-187: Was this chapter better in the drama department for you? Lol. If not, the next one should be. Good, I'm happy you're enjoying Eloise and Neville coming out of the woodwork. I'm so glad you read my Author's Notes, as boring as some of them are! lol. Glad you liked the idea of me falling on my face! Glad to know you care. *sniff sniff* lol, just kidding, it was really hilarious. I just got my pictures back from it and there's a nice close up one my friend took of my butt covered in snow. It's a very flattering shot! (NOT!!)

Wiccan PussyKat: Er...don't hurt me! Lol, I'm sorry that only George got to find out about the cancer here, and even he doesn't know the whole story! I had to lead everyone on though! Otherwise, all you smart cookies out there would have known that something big was going to happen, and I wanted it to be a shock! Each year it seems that Hermione's loosening up more and more. Now, she can have a bit of a sense of humor! You're right, she does have bigger problems. Lol, I hope you'll be able to maintain your sanity until the next chapter! Hahaha!

Chibi-Bex: Don't worry! *pats you on head* Fred is even more taken then George. That is why we can work together to break them up and take them for ourselves. Let's see, that will require some silly string, some rope, and an elaborate kidnapping plan, whether for the twins or their crushes/girlfriends, I'm not sure yet. Lol. Or you can go for bill. Hmm...Charlie seems like a fair specimen as well. Lol. No, Fred is the real one for me! We're meant to be! The whole fact that he's a fictional character is just a small detail that we will, in time, overcome. Hahaha. For Lupin's picture, go to and on the left side,

click on Movie III. His picture's under staff pics, and, in character, under set pictures I think? Just the general movie pictures. The song from the trailer was awesome! Yeah, I hope they use a real dog for Sirius rather than messing it up by trying to animate it (think of the disaster they called Fawkes). Fred and George dolls??? OMG, I want!!

Heretic Angel: Oh, I see. That sounds like fun, but unfortunately, I'm so busy right now I can barely find time to update this fic! And I'm going to be rather busy soon with perhaps writing other fics along with school and midterms and college applications and stuff. I wish I had the time and thank you for the offer! Maybe in a few months you can ask me again, though this year looks like it's going to be a hectic one! I will try to check out your story though, when I get a free moment!

Nelum: lol, I can't wait for our senior ball, our only formal of the year. I love to dance (as you might be able to tell from all the a/n's where I'm talking about my solo dance parties). I think my date last year was a bit embarrassed because not only do I dance enthusiastically, but I sing all the songs that I know at the top of my lungs. It was so fun though! There was swing dancing (which nobody could actually do, but we tried) and the Macarena and some funny 80s music (we tried and failed to do the robot, but my friend Jordon could do it!) There was country too where everybody attempted line dancing, trying to remember how from the fifth grade when all the schools supposedly learned how (wow, that did not work! Lol) And there was a big dance contest where they wandered around looking for the 50 most energetic dancers who, without stopping for an hour, could dance to this really wide variety of music. Needless to say, Jordon and I, the big dancers of the group (I based Harry at the ball on him) grabbed our dates and went for it. Jordon and I won cds (of mostly crappy music)! It was great! Okay, that was a long ramble, but once I got reminiscing, I couldn't stop.

Gypsy t. Potter: Wow, you thought that chapter was the most amazing of them all? Yay!!! Hahaha, you'd actually pay for this? That's so cool. Gives me hope for if I ever write actually publishable stories. Well, this update's in under a week! This chapter is really long, not quite action packed, but it had some drama, and it didn't

take longer than a week, or did it? I actually can't remember when I updated last. Voila! Goals met, sort of. Thank you for the wonderful compliments!! I would love it if you put a link to my story on your website!!! Thank you so much! I'm so excited!

Firemask: I'm glad you're going to start reviewing again. I'm still so happy you're still with this story! Well, I can't wait to throw myself down a hill again. Urg, well, I hope you liked the drama of the chapter, even if it wasn't what you may have expected. I'll definitely try not to get myself killed, especially now that I've laid down this big cliffie. What would you readers do without me?

Samara-chan: hehehe, I think Sirius may have been good in potions. It's a possibility if he and James were the chief pranksters of Hogwarts, right? Maybe not. Lol. Of course, I could see the class being a hilarious disaster. Oh my God. You are a genius. Honestly, when I read your review my mouth dropped open. "They'll probably be in denial for a while...they might think it's some sick joke." I swear, I wrote this chapter before reading your review and you pegged it exactly!! Wow, we are definitely on the same wavelength, if that even makes sense. Ah, you've got me really wanting to see the Ring again!!!

Ckat44: Oh, your throat hurts when thinking of Harry's time running out? That's really cool for me! Lol. Curious to know what the ending of this chapter did to your throat then! Hehehe, yes I am evil. I've accepted it though. There are a few chapters left. I can't believe how popular this fic is either!! Honestly, it amazes me every time I see the number of reviews!! I never imagined so many people would read this fic, and I'm so thankful. I know the overwhelmed feeling. The jaw-dropping, dance til you can't stand any longer feeling. Lol. I'm surprised my fic has turned out so accurately medically. I have known multiple people with cancer, but none with Leukemia. That's why I made a big deal about their being different affects for wizards with the cancer than Muggles, so I didn't have to worry about it too much. I hope your grandparents are both all right. I don't have a certain update date, it's just whenever I have a spare few hours to do my review responses. Wow, I've never heard of the fic of the month thing, but that sounds so fantastic! Thank you so much!!

Also thanks to: Romm, tati1, jo0609, Cestrel (Lol, Snape is a big sweetie at heart. I'm sure of it!), Liniel Eryn (I didn't write a scene of that. He only took over the lower classes. I'd watch out for the younger students if I were Snape! *evil grin*), mell5 (yes, Snapey really does like him! Awww! Er...you'll have to wait and see for the rest!), PhoenixPadfoot89, charmed (Thank you! Er...would I? Lol), Oxi-Nu (I'm terribly sorry about your aunt. That's always hard.), Ashes7, SiriKat, EriEka127, BabyBlu4, peramiell, kagomepotter, Saph (lol, deal!), HG/HrRFan4ever (Thank you! Whose favorites list did you find me on? I hope you feel better!!), fanagal (*evil grin* oh yes, I am evil. Hahaha!! Ahhh! Don't let Dobby near me with his good intentions!!), Shawn Picket (hahaha!! That is definitely true with the Neville thing. Poor Ron!), Ratgirl, shadowarwen, musicstarlover, Molly Morrison (I think Snape already fulfilled his life debt to James several times throughout the series!! Starting first year with saving Harry from falling from his broom!), Crystal113 (Don't worry, when I'm writing or thinking of what to write, I talk as if I AM my characters. Lol. It's quite embarrassing when somebody walks in and I'm sitting there shaking my head and saying things like, "No, this can't be...If this is a prank, that's really sick...I'm so sorry George." Heheh), ReflectionsOfReality (No, I haven't gotten your previous reviews, but I really appreciate this one!), Maximum Poofy-Pissed Off Queen, Jedi-Bant (Thanks! I'm glad you think Harry's realistic in his humanness.), RosemaryJolene, Biggi (I'm glad you decided to read my fic despite your reservations! Isn't Enahma great?), Helen, water drifter (aww that's so sweet! You and your cousin sound like me and my sister. I'm glad she recommended this to you!), Nutmeg tree, and Crystal Tips (Thank you so much!)

Author's Note: Hey my wonderful, spectacular readers and reviewers. Over 1000 reviews!! AAAHHAHHHHHHHHHH!!!! THANK YOU SO MUCH!!!!!! You reviewers are really what has kept this fic going so I bow down to you all (in a good way, not in a Death Eater bowing at Voldie's feet way). I'm sorry for the delay, but I just finished my senior thesis report and turned it in Friday. Though I'm not making any promises, I'm hoping that I can update the next few chapters slightly quicker. Once winter holiday begins I'll hopefully be able to really get down and work out all the remaining kinks and get those chapters posted. I was aiming for a Christmas deadline, but that might be impossible. Maybe New Years? We'll see. Anyways, Happy Holidays everyone! This is my all-time favorite time of year. I'm making all my presents as usual, so today is going to be filled with much gluing and sewing. I got everybody Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans and I'm making little pouches to put them in. Has anyone ever tried them? They're so wonderful! Of course I almost threw up after eating a vomit flavored one. You've got to wonder who taste-tests those flavors. *shudder* Anyways, thank you all once again. My sister and I had a wonderful dance party, though I still have yet to treat her to our celebration virgin strawberry daiquiris yet, but the time will come! Lol. Hope you all enjoy the chapter! On with the show!

The teachers were surrounded first and, taken by surprised, were easily captured in an invisible blockade that Voldemort had invented, leaving the professors hopeless without the counter curse. Spells could not be shot from inside out, only from the outside in, and the professors were immediately disarmed. Everyone screamed in horror at the sight of Voldemort, who had entered after his Death Eaters, and most scrambled to the doors. The students found themselves unable to escape from the Great Hall. With a flick of Voldemort's wand, the tables disappeared leaving nothing to hide behind. Those who tried to fight back had their wands taken from them. Eventually, the students were backed up against the walls of the Great Hall, like a stadium crowd.

Ron pulled Hermione behind himself so his body shielded hers.

"Ron, what are you doing?" she hissed.

“Mione, they can easily find out that you’re a Muggleborn so stay behind me,” he whispered. He looked around to find that many had had the same idea. The Muggleborns and Half-bloods had been pushed to the back, being shielded by rows of Pure-bloods. Even some of the Slytherins were blocking some young and frightened Muggleborns.

The Death Eaters began circling, searching through the students. It seemed, however, that they did not find what they were looking for. Ron felt the blood leave his face as he realized who was being sought after.

“Where is Harry Potter?” Voldemort boomed angrily.

“Leave him be, Tom, he’s just a boy,” Dumbledore bellowed menacingly.

“I’ll deal with you later old man,” Voldemort hissed before casting a powerful silencing charm on the invisible cage containing the professors. “Now,” he said turning back to the students. “Which of you know the whereabouts of Harry Potter?” he asked.

Silence and nervous glances filled the room.

“I said, I’d like to know the whereabouts of Harry Potter, NOW!”

More silence followed.

“I suggest somebody come forward before I begin killing students to get my answer. I am very impatient.”

Ron looked anxiously at Hermione. They didn’t want anyone to die but nothing short of a truth serum would get it out of them.

“Fine, if that’s the way you want to play it.” He nodded at one of the Death Eaters who turned and grabbed a second-year Hufflepuff girl and dragged her out crying to the Dark Lord. Her friends all cried her name and pleaded for her life.

The professors were pounding on the invisible barrier shouting words that couldn't be heard.

Voldemort lifted his wand. "Avada Kedavra."

Green light shot toward the girl and everyone screamed or gasped. The girl shut her eyes, squeezing out some final tears.

But the light never hit. Everyone peeked out from behind their hands. The girl cracked open an eye to find the green light frozen midair, right in front of her. Every eye in the room stared at it in wonder.

"What?" Voldemort bellowed furiously.

It then simply dropped to the ground, shattering like glass and then disappearing all together.

"Leave her alone. I'm here."

Everyone looked over to see Harry walking fearlessly into the room, wand in hand. Several of his friends shouted for him to run, but Harry ignored them all.

Voldemort's scowl turned into a malicious grin.

"Ah, Potter, I've been looking for you." He waved a hand nonchalantly toward the girl and a Death Eater shoved her back to her friends who all hugged her, bawling.

"Oh God, Ron," Hermione whispered. "I don't think he's going to be able to do this!"

"So we meet again. I assume you haven't forgotten our last meeting."

"You mean the one where you failed to kill me again?" he asked cheekily.

Voldemort's eyes flashed with anger.

“Pure luck. I assure you that this time, you will not be leaving this room alive and the wizarding world will have you to thank for strengthening my powers.”

The teachers were banging against the invisible cage even more ferociously. Harry was pleased to see that Voldemort had taken the bait, but bent his face into a look of confusion.

“What I want to know is how you learned that sneaky little trick of getting into my head,” Voldemort continued. “It took too much of my valuable time to figure out how to block that little connection. I couldn’t do anything until I could make sure you weren’t spying on my plans. It was quite annoying.”

“That’s my little secret. How can you be so sure that I haven’t been spying on all your plans?” he asked, totally bluffing. He hadn’t had any visions since the last attack, but he figured it couldn’t hurt to cause the Dark Lord some doubt as to Harry’s control of the situation. But Voldemort didn’t look too concerned.

“I know you haven’t been spying on my plans because I’m in here right now. It’s taken months of discretely breaking down these barriers one by one, while making it so they appeared to still be there. Did your precious headmaster ever tell you what a brilliant student I was?” he asked imperiously.

“Are we getting a little cocky, Tom?” Harry asked insolently.

Whether it was being insulted by a fifteen-year-old or the use of his hated given name, Voldemort’s face twisted into a look of fury. Harry mentally prepared himself to block any spells hurled at him, but sensed that Voldemort wasn’t going to attack him yet. Instead of cursing Harry, Voldemort threw his hands up toward the ceiling and shouted an unfamiliar spell. Light shot out of his hands and formed itself into a dome surrounding only Harry, Voldemort and his Death Eaters. It was similar to the clear fortress holding the professors, but was designed to keep others out instead of in.

“Now we can get down to what I came here to do.” Voldemort hissed. “Crucio!”

The spell came whizzing toward Harry, but he easily blocked it.

“You can’t block Unforgivables!” he shouted furiously.

“I believe I just did,” Harry said cheekily.

“So, you have some new tricks up your sleeve I see. Well, no matter then. I’m going to let my Death Eaters have a bit of fun before we get down to business.” He clapped his hands once and suddenly wands from each Death Eater were trained on Harry. Voldemort paused before signaling the battle to begin.

“Don’t kill him,” he said before stepping back to watch the show.

The battle began between Harry and the Death Eaters. He tried to focus on what they were going to do, but there were too many of them. The most he had dueled against was four people, now there were at least fifty and even though they had less skill than Harry’s professors, the number of them was disabling Harry’s ability to sense what they’d do.

Curses were shot at him from all directions. The masked figures firing curses incessantly. He dodged and blocked and shielded them, shooting his own at every chance he got. He tried to remember everything he had learned in his lessons. He managed to get many Death Eaters to hit each other and faked many out, making them jump right into his spells. He was able to block spells with his left hand using wandless magic, while attacking with his wand in his right hand. He could stare intensely at a person and the next thing they knew, they were on their backs missing their wand.

After only a few minutes, he had half of the Death Eaters’ wands. Just as many were left in body binds. Everyone was surprised. They knew Harry was good at dueling, but he was fighting over fifty Death Eaters. He had been hit by a few curses but had been able to fight the effects, recovering and catching the Death Eaters by surprise.

But as Snape had warned him of earlier, the Energy Potion had only given him superficial energy that was quickly fading. The fight was

draining him of energy with each spell, and it was becoming obvious. His opponents soon discovered that Harry was having a tougher time blocking and dodging the Cruciatus Curse since it was an Unforgivable. The ones with wands circled around him, filling the gaps left by their fallen comrades. One of the Death Eaters gave a signal.

“Crucio!” they all shouted simultaneously. Harry was too drained to conjure up a strong enough shield. He couldn’t block and dodge them all. Two hit him in the back. Pain engulfed his body as he fell to the ground, dropping his collections of wands. He was unable to fight against their curses any longer as he was engulfed by fiery pain. Then the agony increased as another Death Eater added his own “Crucio!” to the bunch. Then another did the same; and another; and another until Harry couldn’t think of anything else. He didn’t know where he was, what was happening, or who was casting those excruciating curses. He could only think about the torturous waves of pain coursing through his body. He wished he could die just to stop all feeling.

Suddenly, the curses ceased. He still felt incredibly sore and the painful remnants of the curses continued to throb in his very veins, but the realization of his situation came rushing back to his consciousness. He was lying on the ground. He tasted blood from biting his tongue. He saw half moon cuts on his palms where his fingernails had dug into his skin as a result of clenching his fists so hard. As he gasped for air, he realized that his throat was incredibly sore from screams he didn’t remember.

He looked around him. Professor McGonagall was crying furiously while Dumbledore looked murderous. Harry looked over to see Ron and Hermione banging against the clear wall screaming, “Stop it!” and “Leave him alone,” tears streaming down Hermione’s face. Neville was shaking and covering his ears, presumably to block out Harry’s previous screams. He was muttering “No no no no no no....” and shaking his head. Harry felt sympathetic toward his friend, knowing that Neville must have just been reminded of what happened to his parents.

Eloise was kicking the force field as hard as she could, screaming for Harry to run. Many students were trying to break down the barrier, working together to cast any spells they could recall at the dome, but nothing worked.

Harry looked around for his wand but realized that it was gone with the others. He shakily got to his feet, ignoring the jeering laughs from the Death Eaters. His legs felt wobbly. He coughed into his hand, spraying it with blood, which he wiped off on his robes.

"Well, I thought you were all powerful, Harry," Voldemort sneered, stepping forward. "I guess you are, in fact, just a little boy."

"A little boy that seems to have gotten the best of you quite a few times," he said hoarsely.

Voldemort glared at him. He nodded at two Death Eaters who roughly grabbed Harry's arms, holding him to the spot. Harry was feeling too weak to fight back or use his wandless magic.

"You won't get the best of me this time," Voldemort said, grinning evilly.

Harry struggled as best he could, but just wore himself out even more. "I already have. You're proving to everyone what a coward you really are, getting your Death Eaters to make sure I'm weak enough for you to handle," Harry spat. Voldemort's eyes flashed dangerously.

"I am not cowardly, Potter, I'm just not one to waste my time playing foolish games with an insolent brat like you."

Suddenly, the Death Eater on his right threw curses at the other Death Eater that was holding Harry, and Voldemort. He gripped Harry's arm tightly and began pulling him away.

"Professor?" Harry whispered. "What are you doing?" he asked as Snape began to throw more curses toward Death Eaters.

"I've changed my mind, Potter, this isn't right. I'm going to get you out of here," he said in a determined voice.

“No, professor, there’s no chance for this to work. Just get out of here. They’ll kill you!” Harry insisted frantically. He didn’t want Snape to get killed. The man had helped him so much this year. “If I go now, he’ll just kill students!”

“If you stay, he’ll kill you!” Snape hissed, blocking them from a particularly nasty curse.

“I can’t run away now when I could stop him!” he insisted, weakly pulling his arm, but Snape’s grip was too strong and Harry’s energy was depleted.

“It’s not your job to protect them!”

“Yes it is! It’s been my job since I was one, whether I like it or not. You should know that by....”

Harry was interrupted as he was hit with another round of Cruciatus curses. He collapsed to the ground and focused on trying not to scream.

Unfortunately, in the split second that Harry’s collapse distracted him, Snape felt his wand being ripped out of his hand by the disarming spell. Death Eaters were on him in a second, dragging him before their master. One of the Death Eaters ripped off Snape’s mask and the student body gasped in seeing the face of their potions master. Voldemort frowned.

“Tsk tsk, Severus, I’m disappointed. I had questions about your loyalty, but I didn’t think you’d be as stupid as to side with that bumbling old fool. Well, after I deal with my prior obligations,” he said, indicating Harry who had been recaptured by Death Eaters. “I will teach you a lesson about the punishments for spies. We’ll see just how sorry you are.” He turned to the masked figures holding Snape. “Put him with the others,” he instructed, waving a hand toward the professors. They dragged a struggling Snape up toward the staff and shoved him roughly inside. Snape immediately whipped around and kicked the barrier screaming profanities that fell only upon the ears of the other professors since the sound shields were still up.

"Now, back to you, Harry," He walked slowly toward the boy who wouldn't have been able to stand without the Death Eaters holding him up. He had coughed up a lot more blood, which was now covering the sleeve he had used to wipe it away.

With each step, Harry's scar burned, but he miraculously refrained from screaming. Finally, Voldemort was right in front of Harry, who could hardly see through the pain.

"So, this is the hero of the wizarding world, a weak little boy with too much arrogance for his own good. Pathetic," he sneered. "You know, I've done my fair share of research on you. You know what I've found, Harry?"

When it became clear that Harry wasn't going to respond, Voldemort continued. "I found that a hero is all that you've ever been. Your relatives despise you since they're filthy Muggles who don't understand your so-called importance. You're worthless to them. Your friends and classmates like you when you save the school, but they turn against you pretty quickly, now don't they?"

"No," he growled, realizing the truth in the accusation as he said it.

"Oh really, well my sources seem to be under the distinct impression that the school turned against you when they discovered your ability to speak Parseltongue. And did they not even wear badges with hateful messages about you on them last year? But maybe the phrase 'Potter Stinks' holds a different meaning to you."

Harry glanced around, his face reddening with embarrassment. Everyone had looks of shame on their faces. Many had tears dripping down their faces as their guilt overwhelmed them.

"No, they were just supporting the one who should've been the champion," he said firmly, though he knew it wasn't the entire truth.

"You may as well admit it, Harry. Those who you are trying to protect right now don't give a damn about you. You're nothing to them. Nothing except a famous scar," he said, tapping Harry's scar with his

finger. It erupted in pain. Harry couldn't be certain that his head was not, in fact, ripping in two. His legs gave out but the two Death Eaters held him up.

Finally, Voldemort pulled his hand away triumphantly, leaving Harry gasping for air.

Then, Harry did something nobody expected; he spit right in Lord Voldemort's face. Everyone gasped and even Voldemort looked shocked. His eyes filled with loathing and he backhanded Harry across the face, slicing Harry's cheek with a ring he was wearing. To his dismay, however, Harry didn't make a sound and just turned his face calmly back to Voldemort.

"Let's just see how your fellow students care for you shall we? Lucius, it's time for your son's first chance to prove himself. All eyes snapped to Draco Malfoy, who looked utterly shocked. One of the masked figures stalked over and grabbed his arm, whispering a spell to allow them back through the barrier. The boy looked nothing short of petrified as his father pushed him down into a bow in front of the Dark Lord. Harry knew this should look funny, the arrogant Slytherin looking so vulnerable, but he couldn't seem to find the humor.

"Ah, Draco," Voldemort smirked. "Your father is one of my most loyal servants. He has given me every assurance that you will follow in his footsteps. I'm giving you your first challenge. This should be immensely pleasurable: causing pain to your sworn enemy. This is what your father trained you for. Stand to face him and cast the Cruciatus on him." Voldemort leaned closer to Malfoy, who shuddered. "Make him scream," he hissed with glee.

The blonde boy positively shook with fright as he walked over to face Harry, whose arms were still being held by the two Death Eaters. Harry met Malfoy's gray eyes, which were wide with fear. Malfoy looked back at him and looked indecisive. His father shouted for him to get on with it and he flinched.

Harry's rival in everything from Quidditch to hallway skirmishes raised a trembling wand at him. Harry tensed up, knowing the pain was coming soon. He felt like he should hate the boy right now, despise

him really, but he couldn't. He felt sympathy for him. Malfoy was just fifteen and was being forced into doing something he didn't want to, all because his father had chosen a certain path in life.

Malfoy opened his mouth to say the spell. He couldn't seem to tear his eyes away from the raven-haired Gryffindor, who was trembling in pain. He had expected to find loathing those eyes, but was surprised to find only pain, resignation, and the most shocking of all, compassion. He couldn't remember ever seeing compassion directed toward himself before.

Malfoy slowly lowered his wand.

"What the hell do you think you are doing?" his father hissed. "Hurt him! You hate him!"

"I—I can't," he stammered, trying to fight back tears as the hate shown through in his father's voice and the Dark Lord looked at him murderously. "P-please," he pleaded with his father, "I c-can't."

"You CAN'T?" Mr. Malfoy roared. "If you can't do this, then how the hell do you think you're going to manage as a follower of the Dark Lord?"

The younger Malfoy took a deep breath. He shot a look at Harry and a look of certainty settled over his face. "I won't become a Death Eater. I can't do this kind of stuff! I won't," he said shakily but determinably. Voldemort looked livid.

"Lucius, I better not be hearing this," he growled.

Malfoy Senior ripped off his mask, his face red with fury. He glared at his son.

"Do it now!" he screamed. "You will become a Death Eater! YOU WILL CURSE HARRY POTTER!!!"

"I WON'T!" Malfoy Junior shouted back defiantly.

"Crucio!"

The students gasped, unable to believe that a father would cast the Cruciatus on his own son. They watched as their classmate writhed on the floor, screaming in agony. Harry was struggling against those restraining him, shouting at Malfoy Senior to stop.

The curse ceased leaving Malfoy on the floor panting, shaking from the remnants of pain. His father glared down at him in disgust.

"You are a failure," he sneered hatefully. "You've disgraced our entire family."

"No. Malfoy!" Harry yelled. The boy looked up at him sorrowfully. Harry looked intently into his eyes to make sure he understood the sincerity. "You're better than he'll ever be." The pain in Malfoy's eyes lessened slightly at the heartfelt statement from his former enemy and nodded slightly.

"What the hell is going on? First Severus and now this pathetic boy? Don't mind him for now, Lucius, we'll deal with your son later."

Mr. Malfoy sneered at the shaking boy on the floor. "He's no son of mine," he spat coldly. The younger Malfoy choked back a sob and scooted away from his father. Before he could reach the barrier, Voldemort barked a spell at him. Several coils of light sprung from his wand and twisted, forming a cage around Malfoy. The Slytherin cautiously touched the bars of light, but jumped back in pain, holding a burnt finger.

Voldemort and the other Death Eaters turned their attention back to Harry.

"Your time is over, boy. You're going to burn in hell just like your bigheaded father and your filthy Mudblood mother," Voldemort

Harry snapped. "Don't you dare talk about my parents you bloody murderer!" he yelled, struggling once again against those holding him.

"Really, Harry, how do you know it isn't true? Because people told you that your parents were kind and caring? People lie. Do you

honestly think they'd tell you what disgraces they really were? How can you really be sure what they were like when you can't even remember them?"

Harry paused. Voldemort was right. How did he know what they were really like? Nobody would tell a boy that his dead parents were complete failures. Maybe Snape really was being honest all those times.

"That's because you murdered them," Harry said, glaring.

"Yes, well it's a good thing isn't it? Can you imagine what they'd say if they saw you right now? They'd be horribly disappointed in you as everyone else is. You're whole purpose in life was to defeat me and you couldn't even do it."

"We'll see about that," Harry snapped.

Voldemort laughed. "I'm afraid it's too late, Harry. You'd really have to have something big up your sleeve to protect you from what I'm about to do to you, and frankly, I don't think you do. And if you think that anybody will really care when you die, you're horribly mistaken. All you are is their little hero, and now you've lost. Now you are nothing. You're worthless."

Harry winced at the harsh words that reminded him of the Dursleys. He tried to tell himself that it wasn't true, but he found himself filled with doubt.

'No. Sirius cares. Ron and Hermione care. Ginny cares. Fred and George care. Neville and Eloise care,' he told himself, but he couldn't help feel incredibly alone, his confidence in that belief faltering drastically. After all, hadn't it been he who had always gotten them into danger? He had practically ruined their year after telling them about his cancer. He loved the Weasleys, Hermione, and Sirius with all his heart. They were the only family he had ever known. But they all had their own families or other preoccupations. He was filled with embarrassment at the thought that he had cared for him far more than they had for him.

But then he remembered the twins telling him that he could always talk to them and that they considered him a brother in all but blood. He remembered Hermione worriedly taking care of him, skipping school for him. Ginny exacting revenge on Cho for him and inviting only him to the movies with her class. Ron being there for him every time he needed someone, waking him up every morning despite the difficulty of the task, reading endless medical books just for him. How Ron had cried for Harry when Harry had never seen the redhead cry for anything before.

Most of all, he remembered Sirius telling him that he loved him. He inwardly smiled at the memory and firmly decided that Voldemort was wrong. There were people who cared for him, and no matter what happened, no one could take that away from him.

Voldemort took a few steps back and raised his wand. Cries and pleas came from all around, but Voldemort ignored them all.

Harry struggled against his captures.

“Harry!”

Harry looked over to find his friends calling his name desperately.

“Harry, you know he’s lying! You know we’ve always cared,” Hermione sobbed pleadingly. Harry nodded reassuringly. As he saw Voldemort open his mouth, Harry ceased struggling and shut his eyes, fully focusing his powers inward.

“Recnac Sunimoon. Recnac Sunimoon. Recnac Sunimoon,” he muttered until he began to feel a burning sensation begin to grow from his chest. It was working.

“Anackarinina Daewarro!” Voldemort shouted, a blue light shooting from the end of his wand right into Harry’s chest. The Death Eaters dropped Harry’s arms and stepped away, but Harry remained upright as he felt the spell rush through him. As he had when he had performed the spell on Mr. Stenson, Harry clasped his hands over his chest where the light was entering, just to stop the immensely painful

tingling sensation concentrated in that one spot, but it had no effect. Soon Harry's whole body was tingling.

Harry saw a brilliantly white light surround him. As the light got brighter, Harry felt weaker. His eyelids drifted closed. Finally, the bright light, at the end of the string of blue light, as if a fish on the end of a fishing line, was ripped from Harry's body.

Harry's world went dark as he collapsed to the ground, dead.

A/N: *Ducks behind chair as fruit, keyboards, and other dangerous objects fly overhead.* Don't abandon the story!! Please!! It's not over yet! There are a few chapters left and even all you "Let Harry Live or Celebony will die!" fanatics should stick around to finish off the story, even if you're a bit disappointed. Please!!

Lady Abbey Bartlet: You're welcome. Lol. That would be a very shocking thing for Snape to learn, Harry almost being put in Slytherin. I hope he ends up finding out in canon. Lol, just because he can be a bit thick at times, I think he can still have some job like a healer. That wouldn't fit him in canon (too much work and I don't think he'd be interested. lol), but I think it could work here. Hermione was taking her O.W.L.s and probably studying for her next O.W.L.s during the first and second parts of last chapter. Hmm...what will I do? I guess you'll have to stick with the fic and see!

SiriusWolf: Why couldn't they come on a good day? Because I'm too evil for that, lol. He's having a good power day, whether its because of the energy or not. Lol, please don't flame me! Lol, ah, go ahead. With all the death threats I got from that last cliffie, I'm sure I can take it. Lol. Jan. 20 is right near my birthday! Yay! Lol. Don't worry, I'll start another story after this, though which one of my many plot ideas I'll go with, I don't yet know. I don't know why you weren't in the review section! I'm very sorry. Sometimes I accidentally skip people. Also, if they review under a different chapter, I generally don't get them, since I only print out the reviews for the chapter I'm on.

Whatever the reason, please forgive me! I haven't see any of those movies yet. I did see the HP3 preview that was at the beginning of Looney Tunes. Lol. But I REALLY want to see Timeline (I LOVED the book! And the guy who's playing Doniger is the same one who's playing Lupin in HP3!). I also really want to see Haunted Mansion, just because I liked Pirates of the Caribbean so much and the kids I babysit are crazy about it.

Luinlothana: Harry not drinking the potion wasn't really careless I'd say. It's not like he forgot. But he is a bit reckless with his health and seems to think that if he ignores the problem, it will go away. Mostly, he knew he didn't have that much time left and didn't want to miss out on the opportunities to live, rather than be asleep through the rest of his life. Hopefully a lot of your questions were answered in this chapter, though, hopefully, this chapter has given you even more questions, lol. Well, I think I will write another fic after this one. I can only pray that it will meet everyone's expectations.

Chibi-Bex: Wow, good luck on those scary-sounding exams. HAHAAHA!! I was laughing so hysterically at your kidnapping the twins idea! Ok, how about we cover the Great Hall in chewed gum so everyone gets stuck to the floor. Then, we use the rope to lasso the twins and pull them out of the gum and over to us. Then, we spray all the windows with silly string so nobody knows which way we go! Then we hop onto our getaway brooms and proceed to impress the two gorgeous redheads with our wonderful flying skills. Hehehe, I'm a shortie at 5'3" so tall is probably not too great for me. I had a boyfriend once that I had to stand on my tiptoes to dance with and it was just too awkward. I felt like I was dancing with a dad or something. Lol. Yeah, Lupin isn't how I imagined him either. I imagined him as a handsome guy, not strikingly handsome, but soft handsome. Does that make sense? His hair would be kind of a light brown color with bits of gray, but mixed in well, not weird looking (like this neighbor of mine who dyes a streak of her hair gray! She looks like Cruella DaVille!) Just a warm look about him, like your favorite uncle or something (of course my only uncle is a druggie-looking type with nasty hair and a really ugly mustache who I've only met about once in my life, but that's why we have imagination. Lol.) Peter's pretty much how I imagined, lol. Really slimey and sickly but fat-looking, with something about him that makes him just look like a rat.

Please keep reading my fic even though Harry's not as...erm...alive as you'd hoped.

Fantagal: LOL, each time I read your reviews like this I laugh so hard. What am I doing to poor Harry? Jeez, I must be insanely evil. Lol, oh well! Well, keep reading please!!

Samara-Chan: Guess what I just watched! The Ring! Jeez, that movie freaks me out! You know what I don't get though? Why does everyone always go "Everyone will suffer" like they're quoting the movie? That's not even in the movie! Maybe it's in the extras or something. I didn't get to watch those though since I had to return the video already. *sigh* Lol, well, your friend may be a bit odd, but maybe old Voldie did have a screwed-up childhood, but is that really an excuse? I mean, look at Harry! Even in canon, his childhood was a mess. But I guess that's the point. Harry chose to be good while Voldie chose to be bad.

Bulldogchik05: lol, if you didn't like the ending to last chapter, you're probably going to kill me for this one. Thanks for all the wonderful compliments. I try to make each major part (and a lot of the smaller parts) actually be in there for a reason, even if that reason might not be too obvious at first. I'm glad you liked George's reaction. I tried to put myself into his position, but I really hope I got the reaction right. Lol, you thought that cliffhanger was bad? What about this one? Lol. I hope you stay with me even after this little cliffie.

BratPrincess-187: Lol, I should be hanged? Hahahaha, well, I guess that's better than what Shawn Pickett had in store for me lol. Yeah, the story is almost over, but there are still a few more chapters that I hope everyone will stick around to read. Hopefully I'll be able to update a little quicker, as I wanted to be done with this story by Christmas. I don't know if that will happen though. We'll see. Yeah, it was a bit stupid of Harry not to take his potion, but he didn't want to miss out on the short time he had left. I hope this was Action and Drama filled enough for you. (Oh the photos are pretty hilarious! Hehehe)

Pameruh qui aime Malfoy: I know! Each year my French teachers say "Okay class, this year there will be absolutely no English spoken in

this class” and they NEVER follow through. They speak more English than the students (I think that’s because some of them secretly don’t know fluent French. I mean my Honors French teacher had to look up words in the French/English dictionary all the time! I can’t spell either, so never fear! Lol, I wanted to say it last review response, but I couldn’t: I’m so glad you like “good Draco” since I made him a goodie. I mean, he’s no saint, but he has a good heart, deep down. Lol. He’s definitely not Death Eater material, à mon avis. Je suis très heureuse que tu parles français parce que maintenant, je peux la pratique. Hahaha, I don’t think that makes any sense.

Firemask: lol, you can’t decide whether to punch me or hug me? I think that’s exactly what Kota says when she finds out about Harry’s cancer. Lol. Yeah, Harry does seem to be in the Hospital Wing a lot (especially in this fic since I’m a bit evil lol) Erg I think most of your questions were answered in this chapter, and if not, just ask in a review! Lol yes! I love the total bizarreness of the HP3 trailer. Boot camp? Wow, are you going into the military? That’s so cool! That’s the coolest phrase “Love [it] like chocolate on a bad day.” I think I’ll have to find a way to use that in conversation, especially since I’m a bit of a chocolate fiend!

ReflectionsOfReality: lol, yeah, I know. has been acting very crazy lately. I hope it will let me update! The mother of all cliffies....I love it! Hehehe. Oh good, so the longer I keep writing, the longer I will survive. Well, that settles it, I guess I have no choice but to keep writing fanfiction. Lol. I think my life is a pretty good incentive. :) Really? You think I have that potential? Thank you so much! That means so much to me! I’m not sure if that will ever happen, but let’s just say that in kindergarten, when all the other girls wanted to be ballerinas when they grew up, I wanted to be an author. It’s actually quite funny. I have school assignments from first grade about future occupations with me saying “When I grow up I’m going to be a famous author” with pictures of weird misshapen squares and lines that I think were supposed to be pages and pencils. Maybe they were books. Nobody knows. Lol. I’ll be sure to check in with your other personalities if I have any questions. Hahaha.

Ckat44: Um... don’t kill me? Hehehe. Well I think your story “HP and the Minister’s Magic” is great, you just haven’t updated in a good

while. And you have over 300 reviews for it! Please don't abandon this story even though Harry is a bit...dead. *sad puppy-dog face* please??

Wiccan_PussyKat: Lol. I love you guys who get all happy when I make Harry sick. You remind me of me. *wipes away sentimental tear* I'm glad you liked the Snape/Harry interaction in the last chapter (okay, I'm making them sound like specimens in an experiment. Lol) Yeah, Madam Pomfrey can still get snappy with her patients (like the ones that got into the fight) but she now has a bit of a soft spot for Harry and his friends. I know! I was going to point that out by having Fred say something about "Not Snape" to Ron when they're naming off teachers, but that would have been a bit awkward since the reason Ron doesn't hate Snape anymore is because the potions master is helping Harry with the cancer as best he can. Evil, me? *takes a bow* Thank you, thank you! You'll set Cho on me? *shudder*

Serpent of Light: Wow! Thank you so much! I'm so glad you like it when Malfoy isn't a Death Eater in fics since that's how my fic is! I like those fics too! All my friends think I'm insane because I honestly don't think that Malfoy will end up a Death Eater in canon! I think something will happen where he and Harry have to work together at something and help each other out. Maybe that's wishful thinking, but I'm going to allow my delusional mind to believe it.

Feenamoon16: Why does his life have to be so hard? Because I'm evil maybe? Lol. When I first read this I skipped over the word "adult" and thought you said "he hasn't even reached the hood yet." Lol, I couldn't imagine why you thought he was going to be going to the ghetto. Hahaha. Well, I hope most of your questions will be answered in this chapter and the following ones.

SiriuslyObsessed: Harry torture is always lovely. Hahaha. Yay! I'm so happy you liked the chapter!! Thank you! I do think my writing has improved, mostly because of you guys. I love my reviewers so much I try to work at each chapter until it's as good as I can get it. I'm much better now at describing reactions and such. When this fic is totally done, I'll have to wait a month or two and then read it start to finish again. I love doing that. That's when I'll really be able to see if

my writing actually got better by the end or not. Thank you so much! I'm glad you liked that scene! Those types of scenes always make me a bit nervous because it's so hard to write a reaction to somebody else's experience. I'm never sure if I got it quite right. I guess that's where you guys come in. When you tell me it was good, it's a huge relief.

Thundering Lights: Please don't let this be the final showdown between Harry and Voldie? Er....oops? Well, at least I didn't end the story here! Though the ending of the chapter is a bit similar to your prediction of evil me. Lol. Hahaha, I'm glad you love my characters so much! Hmmm... "celebony is a goddess club?" I love it! I don't really practice any particular religion, but I do celebrate Christmas! It's my fav holiday. Good luck on your science report. Pronouncing those damn scientific words is just impossible. I don't even try. Lol.

Also thanks for the wonderful reviews by: Milenn Cassandra Riddle, velith, grumpygrim, grimmyD, lilynjamesAAF, wynjara, HermioneP., helen (I think Luna and Tonks are so great! I love when they're talking about making prefects and Tonks was saying that she lacked certain necessary qualities...like the ability to behave herself. Hahaha.), jo0609, Holly (lol, Thanks!! I'm so glad you don't think anyone, other than Cho and the minor characters, are out of character!), storylover, Siri Kat, Water Drifter, Phoenix marauder (Elite author? LOL, I wouldn't go that far. But thanks!), Kate (all time fav? Wow! Thank you!), Kitsunegary1186, Mary, Chris, Firestorm19, Cestrel, Katy, Charmed 1, pennypacker (lol, yeah, I celebrate x-mas. Now it's only 11 days!), Charmed (I'll see what I can do), Ryan, Erin (lol, umm...I guess this means no cake?), Mell5 (I can't wait for Peter Pan!! I'm so excited!), Magnum-man-05 (the two potions will work together, but not well. The energy will only be a short-lived thing and will eventually run Harry down faster than he normally would have, as you could see in this chapter.), Blue Phoenix2, Romm (me? Try to make you all cry? What would ever make you think that? Lol), Doneril, Maikafuiniel, Shawn Pickett (erg...I think I'll go into hiding for awhile. Lol), Kathfire (Ah, patience is overrated! That's so cool you can check in class. I can't wait until college!), Blackenedsoul, Melanie (the best one on ? Thanks!), Shadowarwen (Yay! I'm so glad I caught you off guard with that ending!), Myr Halcyon, closetfanficaddict, AngelMorph, Leigh, Maximum Poofy-Pissed Off

Queen, xx Schizoid, Lady Scorpio, Terence (lol, don't have a heart attack! Who would I send goofy emails to?), Jay-Jay, ShadowHunter1 (Let Harry have a break? What fun would that be. J/k lol.), Mickeymoose, Biggi (I didn't know Enamha had a chat! That's so cool! Too bad I missed it!), HG/HrRfan4ever, PhoenixPadfoot89, EriEka127 (Lol! No, McDonalds is so great! Lol, very cheap and delicious. Hehehe.), Catiechan, Lindiel Eryn, Ratgirl, Anora (Yeah! "Web of Lies" is awesome! It's in my favorites! I just wish the chapters weren't so short), Syd, ER, BlackDiva, bee, Silver Phoenix Shadow87 (That's so great you want to be a pediatric nurse! My cousin is one and he loves it), Musicstarlover, Midoriliem, Hollie, Crystal113 (I'm glad I caught you off guard with the D.E.'s coming), Paranoialn2005, Pelel (hahaha! Oh no! Don't you love that? I always end up laughing at something and somebody will come in and ask me what's funny but I'm just pretending to do my homework so they think I'm insane.), rhinemjr (*squeals with glee* Best cliffie ever? Thank you!!), venure, LadyLilyPotter, Velith, Molly Morrison, jedidiah, sweet775, schmidielee83, saz (That sounds like a really fun fic to write, but I'd need a very long while to come up with a good plot for it. I won't write it right now, just because I wouldn't be able to write it well at all without knowing where I want to go with it, but I'll definitely keep it in mind to see if I can get inspired. Thanks for the suggestion!), Katie, and tati1(yes, I know all about problems.)

Remember! Don't abandon now! Please!!!!!!

Author's Note: Hey everyone! I've honestly been trying to upload this for the past few days. I don't know if it's just my computer that's been flipping out, or if it's the site, but it seems to be working now. Happy holidays! School's out for winter, thank Merlin! Hopefully, this means I'll be able to buckle down and finish this fic! For those who were confused on exactly what happened last chapter, reread the last part chapter 25. Still confused? Email me, I will explain. For those of you were a bit surprised that Dumbledore was taken by surprise, my only response is that it's not that big of a shock, really. Honestly, if he was never taken by surprise, then why has he hired 2 murderous teachers, Lockhart who's a complete idiot. And in the fifth book, we really see that he's just human. He makes mistakes. He gets caught by surprise. Anyways, yesterday, I gave out little bags (I made them myself!) of Bertie Botts beans, and we spent the whole period in civics trying them. My teacher tried a vomit flavored one. You should have seen his face! lol, needless to say, he spit it out in the trash. We had a great debate over which was worse, sardine or vomit. Some guys were saying that vomit didn't taste all that bad, yet tasted like, and I quote, "cherries, mixed with pizza and warm orange juice." Er, that nearly made me throw up right there. I stand firm on vomit being the worst though. It makes me gag. Anyways, on with the story!

* * * * *

"NOOOOOO!!!" screamed Ron and Hermione, bruising their fists as they banged desperately against the barrier.

Everyone watched the scene in horror, the white light floating above Harry's lifeless body. However, white wasn't the only color, just the dominant one. There were also golden streaks inside, which represented his magic, and a red sphere of light in the center that was growing rapidly in midair. Few knew it but this was Harry's cancer, growing rapidly from the spell Harry had cast.

The blue light shot back into Voldemort's chest, pulling the white light, Harry's life energy, along with it. Finally all light had disappeared and all was silent with shock, confusion, and anticipation.

Voldemort held out his hand, palm up and looked at it curiously. A flame burst up from it and he smiled triumphantly. It then turned to ice, a frozen sculpture of flames, which he hurled at the ground, shattering it into pieces. He began cackling maniacally. His servants all stepped toward him in awe, collapsing to their knees in a semi circle before their master, with Harry's body lying crumpled near his feet. They began bowing and hailing him.

Voldemort turned his gaze to the ceiling and raised both his arms. As the students could see by looking at the enchanted ceiling, the sky outside instantly became covered in dark clouds and rain began pouring down. They could hear the loud crashing of thunder as lightning streaked the sky, as if announcing the ultimate return of the Dark Lord.

Several of the students with parents out there in masks, most of whom were in Slytherin, looked excitedly triumphant, glad they had obviously picked the winning side. They cast looks of malice at Draco Malfoy, whose eyes kept flickering between the dead body of Harry, Voldemort, and his father, trembling with shock. The other students, however, looked either terrified at the sight before them or had looks of anger at the first death of what they knew would be many more. These students got their wands in hand, determined that if they would soon die, they would not go down without a fight. They would fight back as Harry had done.

The professors fell silent, looks of defeat plaguing the faces of all but two. Snape and Dumbledore were silently praying that the plan had worked.

Suddenly, Voldemort's triumphant laughter ceased abruptly, along with the lightning and thunder. Everything seemed to freeze. "What?" he sputtered. He began coughing up blood into his hand. He stared in horror at the pool of blood in his palm. Sweat began pouring off his face. His servants had stopped their groveling and stared at their master. Voldemort fell to the ground.

"Help me," he croaked to his followers reaching a hand out to them, but they all just backed away in horror, not wanting to be inflicted with whatever was happening to their master.

“You’ll all burn in hell,” he hissed. He began to scream in anguish, clawing at his chest. Abruptly, the screaming stopped and Voldemort’s body went slack. The barriers all disappeared along with the cage surrounding Malfoy. There was a flash of light above Voldemort’s body, and somehow, everyone knew he was gone.

“ACCIO WANDS,” Dumbledore bellowed and each of the professors’ wands were returned to their owner. Many of the Death Eaters frantically Portkeyed away, abandoning the ones who didn’t have Portkeys. With the help of the elder members of the student body, the rest of the Death Eaters were quickly rounded up, disarmed, and taken down to the dungeons by professors. Other professors were desperately trying to control the rest of the frantic body of students, leading many to the Owlery. The older students were sent on errands to owl certain people and to comfort the younger children. Dumbledore removed Voldemort’s body.

Meanwhile, as soon as the wards went down, Ron and Hermione raced over to Harry. Ron grabbed Harry’s shoulder and flipped him over so he was lying on his back. His eyes and mouth were closed. His expression was peaceful despite the blood that was still on his cheek and at the corner of his mouth.

“No Harry, no. Don’t be dead,” Hermione chanted, smoothing back his hair as usual, but instead of a warm forehead, Hermione’s hand brushed cold skin. She pressed her head against his chest, but there was no movement to comfort her. She couldn’t stand the lack of the rising and falling and ripped her head away, bursting into sobs.

Ron began shaking Harry’s shoulders as he had done many mornings before.

“Harry WAKE UP!” he screamed, tears pouring down his face. “Harry STOP IT!”

A hand rested gently on his shoulder.

“Mr. Weasley, listen to me, Harry isn’t going to wake up anymore. I’m sorry,” Snape said gently. Ron hit his hand away.

“NO! That’s a lie! He’s just fainted like he did before. He’s just sick, but he’ll be fine. He just has trouble waking up on his own!” he shouted through tears. Hermione was crying hysterically next to him. She had once again rested her head on Harry’s chest, just wanting to be close to him. She cried desperately into his shirt.

“Hermione?”

Hermione looked up. Through her tears, she could see Eloise standing there, crying with little hiccups and quick breaths.

“What if he believed him? What if Harry died thinking that Ron and I didn’t care? That we just wanted him for the fame?” Hermione asked desperately through her heart-wrenching sobs.

Eloise knelt down next to Hermione. “I promise you that he didn’t believe that. Even when the whole world was against him, he always knew he had you two.”

“How—how can you be sure?” she hiccuped through her sobs.

“Trust me, even the blind could see that he thought the world of you two.”

Hermione looked into her eyes and saw that she spoke the truth and that she loved Harry just as much as Hermione and Ron had. Harry and Neville had really been the only people who had talked to her and befriended her. Harry had done more than he could have ever known in asking Eloise to the ball and defending her against the cruelty of the other girls who thought themselves better than her. Hermione wrapped her arms around Eloise and began to cry into her shoulder. Eloise did the same.

“No no no no no…” Hermione heard being quietly chanted behind her. She knew immediately who it was.

“Come here, Ginny,” she said quietly, motioning for her to come to her and Eloise, but Ginny could only stand there shaking her head in disbelief looking at the boy she had loved since they had met, the boy

who had saved her life in her first year. As if in a trance, she knelt down, still shaking her head, whispering "No" through her tears, and just sat there staring at Harry's face. She gently wiped away some blood away from the corner of his mouth with her thumb. Hermione scooted over and began rubbing Ginny's back and rested her head on Eloise's shaking shoulder.

Neville had gone into shock and two seventh year Slytherins helped him to the hospital wing. Students from every house ran over to comfort Draco Malfoy, who was sitting with his hands wrapped around his knees and trembling. Justin Finch-Fletchley from Hufflepuff and a Muggleborn sixth year girl from Gryffindor, who had both been called Mudbloods by Malfoy more times than they could count, helped him to follow Neville.

All these students acted on their own volition, not because of a teacher's request, but because in the last hour stupid house rivalries had been laid aside. They were all in this together.

After Professor McGonagall had finished helping wrap up the Death Eaters, she simply sat on the floor. She should have been the one to go comfort poor Ron Weasley. She should have helped to comfort the screaming, wailing, shaking students. But she couldn't. She could only sit there thinking that she had failed. She was the head of Harry's house, the one who was supposed to look after him. Yet, he had protected her along with the rest of the school. She had been in the same room as him and hadn't been able to protect him.

Harry Potter: the innocent boy with the heart of gold, always unappreciated by everyone. Even she was guilty of that on occasion. She had felt such pride in his accomplishments and such sympathy when he was down. She couldn't forget the horror on his face when she told him he had to take a date to the ball the year before. In that way, he was just a normal vulnerable boy. She had secretly wished she could have comforted him, helped him get ready, helped him pick out his dress robes. Maybe she should have offered, maybe then he would have known that somebody cared.

Ron was fighting with Professor Snape.

“No, he’s NOT DEAD. He’s sleeping, I just need to get some water to splash on him or Madam Pomfrey can give him some potions and...and he’ll be FINE! Don’t you see? He’s not dead!! He can’t be dead!”

“Ron.”

Ron looked up and saw Fred and George through his own blurry eyes, wet with angry, confused tears. What he saw was something astounding. Fred and George had tears dripping down their faces. Fred was biting his bottom lip and George’s chin wobbled a bit as he tried to suppress the tears. He had never seen Fred or George cry before, at least not since they were about four. Ron knew they wouldn’t cry unless it was something serious.

“He can’t be dead. He’s just unconscious or something. He can’t be dead,” Ron insisted to them. Fred pulled Ron into a hug.

“Ron, you have to let go. Harry’s gone. I’m so sorry.”

“But he can’t!”

“I know, but he is. He’s gone.”

Ron ripped away.

“NO!” He raced over to Harry and grabbed his limp hand, holding the cold skin against his own flushed cheek. “Harry wake up, please! Please! Please!” he begged, rocking back and forth. Fred and George silently sat down on either side of him, tears dripping down their cheeks. Finally, he realized that Harry wasn’t going to respond. He would have given anything in the world just to hear Harry mumble for him to go away, but he would never hear that annoyed murmuring again. He laid down Harry’s hand reluctantly and turned to George, burying his face in his shoulder before breaking down in body-racking sobs. Fred scooted over and George put his arm around his twin’s shoulder. Fred began rubbing Ron’s back as Hermione was doing for Ginny, and they all sat and cried together for Harry, while Voldemort’s body lay a ways away, forgotten.

Minutes later, one of the doors burst open. Sirius looked panicked and frantically looked around. His eyes settled on Harry's limp form, surrounded by his sobbing friends.

"NOOOO!"

A few professors tried to stop him to calm him down, but Sirius pushed passed all of them. He raced desperately up to Harry's body, pure terror on his face. Hermione and Eloise pulled Ginny back from Harry, hugging her to them as Sirius approached, looking wild and unpredictable.

The man dropped to his knees next to the boy he considered his son and cupped his godson's face in his hands. "No, Harry, NO! YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO ME!" He turned wildly, his eyes darting from one professor to the other. "Somebody get help! He needs a healer! Get Madam Pomfrey!" he screamed hysterically.

"Sirius," Dumbledore said softly, resting a hand on his shoulder, "he's gone."

Sirius shook off Dumbledore's hand. "No!" he hissed. "He's not gone. He's going to be fine and come and live with me because we planned it and I made him a room and we're going to build a Quidditch pitch and he's going to be fine!" he screamed.

Dumbledore closed his eyes and took a deep breath, a few tears trickling down his cheeks and into his beard being the only signs of his true distress. When Sirius saw the tears, he knew the truth.

"Sirius," the headmaster said again, more softly, "he's gone."

"Nooo," he moaned, turning back to his lifeless godson. He frantically grabbed Harry's wrist and searched for a pulse. When he couldn't find one, he put his ear to the boy's mouth to listen for breath. None came.

"NO!" he cried, scooping Harry's body into his arms. Harry looked so peaceful, as if he were only sleeping. Sirius hugged his godson's body to him and began to hysterically cry. "No, Harry, no! I love you,

remember? I love you," he said, his voice fading into a whisper. He rocked back and forth, hugging Harry to him, refusing to let go, kissing the boy's forehead and hair as he wept. "I love you."

When the twins finally realized that Ron had gone into shock, they carried their little brother to the Hospital Wing, the three girls following silently behind. All stared ahead, tears silently dripping down the faces of the few whose tears had not been yet spent.

They entered the wing to find a distressed Madam Pomfrey.

"Is that Ron? Oh the poor dear. Lay him down right here," she said quietly, lacking her usual authoritative tone. "You are all welcome to stay the night. It might be more peaceful than your dormitories."

She quickly got a bottle of potion from Neville's bedside. Neville was staring wordlessly at the ceiling, tears trickling down the sides of his face. He gave no indication that he had even realized that anyone else had entered the room. Madam Pomfrey gently brushed his tears away, just to have them be placed by new ones.

The medi-witch measured out the potion into some cups. She handed them to the twins, Ginny, and Hermione. She tried to hand one to Ron, but he didn't seem to notice. She turned to the others. "Drink that. It will help you calm down."

"We don't need this. Ron does, look at him," Fred said, looking worriedly at his brother.

Madam Pomfrey looked at him sadly. "Dear, you're on the verge of going into shock. You're shaking. You all are, even if you don't realize it."

Fred held out his hand and, true to the nurse's word, it was trembling uncontrollably. He numbly drank down his bit of the potion and the others followed suit. The potion definitely helped all of them feel better, less shaky and out of sorts. It was as if they had been on a spinning ride that had just stopped. Unfortunately, now that they could see the things more clearly, grief sank in even more.

Fred sat on the edge of an unoccupied bed, pulling Ginny onto his lap. She turned and wrapped her arms around his neck, letting her tears soak his collar as she used to do when she was younger.

"I know nobody believes me. They think it was only a crush, but I really did love him," she whispered so quietly that only Fred heard her words. He hugged her closer as she began to sob.

"I know, Gin, I know," he whispered back.

Eloise walked over to the bed where Neville lay, climbing on and laying down next to him. Neville wrapped his arm around her and pulled her close next to him for comfort.

The nurse sat on the edge of his bed and put a comforting hand on Ron's shaking one.

"Here, dear, drink this up for me. It will calm you down a bit, all right love?" she said gently, holding the cup out toward him.

Ron looked up at her.

"He can't be dead."

Madam Pomfrey let out a sob before getting a weak control over her emotions. "I'm so sorry sweetie."

"He can't be dead," he whispered, seemingly looking through Madam Pomfrey "He can't leave me like this. He's my best friend. He can't be dead."

Hermione came over and kissed Ron on the forehead, her tears dripping down onto his face. Ron looked desperately into her eyes. "He can't be gone," he whispered desperately.

"Drink the potion, Ron," she said soothingly, in a high voice due to her constricted throat constricted with grief, "okay? Please."

Without even a nod, he slowly and shakily grasped the cup and, with Madam Pomfrey's help, brought it to his lips. He closed his eyes and drank down the potion, painfully reminding himself of Harry.

Calmness slowly washed over him. He stopped shaking and his wild thoughts ceased their spinning. The world came into focus around him and there was one thing he could not deny: Harry was not in it. The finality, the reality of the situation sank in like a weight, as if someone had filled his body with cement.

"NO!" he screamed, picking a beaker up off the nightstand and hurling it to the floor. He threw the next closest thing, his pillow, at the opposite wall with all the force he could.

Ron made to get out of the bed, intent on destroying everything in his path, but suddenly froze, staring at the bedpost. He reached out his fingers and touched the post softly and cautiously, as if it were a volatile animal. In a daze, he slowly traced his fingers across the letters that were carved there, "H.P." They were the initials that Harry had carved there while bored in the Hospital Wing just months before. It brought to mind pictures of Harry rolling his eyes behind Madam Pomfrey's back as she sentenced him to long periods of time confined to bed. Pictures of Harry telling him he'd make a great Healer. Pictures of Harry alive. And Ron suddenly realized that there were no more pictures going to be made about Harry.

Hermione put a gentle hand on his cheek, turning his face toward hers. Their eyes met, both full of sorrow, hopelessness, anger, confusion and loneliness. "No," he said meekly, his face screwing up as the tears came. Hermione wrapped her arms around his neck, and Ron clung to the back of her robes, sobbing into each other's shoulders.

Madam Pomfrey cleaned up the broken glass with a flick of her wand and set Ron's pillow on the foot of his bed for when he'd need it. She went into her office, laid her head down on her desk and let her own tears spill.

All the while, Draco Malfoy lay in the bed nearest to the window, unnoticed, staring blankly out at the night sky.

Unfeeling. Strong. Apathetic. Snape had been perfecting that look for years, since he was a boy. That way, when bad things happened, he could convince the world that he didn't care. He could convince himself that he didn't care.

With the sea of faces in the Great Hall it was easy to play his role. He was able to be detached. He had even calmed the Weasley boy when his own head of house had been sitting on the floor staring off into space. He had never seen his respected coworker, his own professor when he had gone to school, with such discomposure. It would have been frightening, if Severus Snape could feel such an emotion in a time of crisis.

But when he had reached his chambers, there were no more judging faces. He was alone. And without the faces, he his comforting mask began to crumble despite his efforts to keep it up and he could no longer convince himself.

He vividly remembered Harry's body crumple to the floor after the life had been ripped out of it. He had been innocent, pure, so full of potential. He had been a fifteen-year-old boy for Merlin's sakes!

Snape grabbed a beaker and, with a cry of fury, hurled it against the wall where it shattered. He didn't even notice the purple liquid hissing as it dissolved the paint where it had hit. The glass shards on the floor caught his eye. He walked over and picked it up with in a strange daze. As he ran his finger over the smooth surface, he had a flashback to the time when he had pulled the shards of glass out of Harry's back, when his preconceived idea of the boy's life had been shattered just like the beaker.

When had he started caring for the young Gryffindor? And why? He had felt strangely protective of him ever since finding out about what his relatives had done to him. The foreign feeling had compelled him to check on the boy at his home after Voldemort's first attack. And at that moment when holding Harry's arm, helping put him up as an offering to the Dark Lord, suddenly their plan didn't matter anymore. Even getting rid of Voldemort didn't seem so important. What had been important was that Harry live. He had thought back to their

conversation in the Hospital Wing that had seemed to have taken place centuries ago, but had really only been a few hours before, and remembered what Harry had brought up about not being at school the following year. At that moment under his Death Eater mask, the notion seemed so incredibly wrong. There seemed to be nothing more horrifying than that idea.

He had been so close! If he could have saved Harry, found the cure, then maybe, for once, there would be some meaning to everything. The idea didn't even make logical sense to Snape, but in some other way, it made all the sense in the world.

He dazedly looked over to all his notes he had written in hopes of curing Harry's cancer. With a snarl of hatred for the pieces of paper, he grabbed them and ripped them in two, throwing them to the ground. All the hope had been for nothing.

Why had he not realized before how wrong he had been? Harry wasn't like James Potter. He wasn't cruel or arrogant. He didn't mercilessly pick on others just for their house or whatever the elder Potter had found so offensive about Snape. No, Harry was just a boy who got wrapped up in some terrible twist of fate that he never deserved. Yet Snape had subjected him to over four years of torture solely because of a father the boy had never met. He felt nauseous as guilt overwhelmed him.

This was why he had spent his whole life trying to not care for anybody. His chest ached and his hands trembled. Everything just hurt so horribly.

"Dammit Albus!" he screamed at the empty room, "You were wrong! You're not supposed to be bloody wrong, but you were! It's not worth it! It's not worth this!" He grabbed a beaker of one of the sample potions he had been working on for his theory and threw it at another wall.

His thoughts spun around wildly, dancing between the classes in which he had terrorized Harry to Harry laying on the floor, covered in blood after being beaten and stabbed by his uncle to hearing the

Weasley boy unintentionally revealing that Harry had defended him to his friends to all the other significant memories about the boy.

He sunk down to the floor, his back against a wall. He buried his face in his hands and did something that he hadn't done since childhood: he cried.

The tears felt foreign but at the same time, comforting, and once he started he couldn't stop. He cried for what seemed like centuries until he was devoid of tears. A sense of determination came over him. He knew what he had to do. He hadn't understood why Albus had told him what he had before leaving the hall, it had seen a useless type of mockery before, but now realized the reason.

Grabbing several pieces of parchment, he began to rack his brain, scribbling down his train of thoughts, all because of a decision he had come to while tears had flooded from his eyes:

'Maybe it is worth it.'

A/N: Confused? Good. Man, some of you guys scare me! I think I may have to reinforce my locks. I feel a bit like Harry, I'm treated great until I do something disagreeable, then the Howlers come, dun dun dun. Lol, just kidding. Your death threats and such are quite, er, amusing. I may join the witness protection program for awhile though, just in case. Lol.

Myr Halcyon: Wow!! Thank you! When I read your review, I ran to my sister and read the first paragraph to her. It was beautiful. Then she kicked me out of her room, but it was great anyways. Well, Dumbledore is only human. He always gets surprised. (Read the Author's note for more ranting. Lol). Oooh, please do that series of illustrations!! And then send them to me!! I used to have a reader who would send me all these spectacular pictures that she drew and I have them all printed out and they're so fun! But I think she's gone. I'm so glad you could picture it so well!! Yay!! Made you cry. Woo

hoo!! Voldemort, if you didn't notice, is a bit psycho. He's so power hungry and desperate for power, and it's been so long since Snape told him about the spell, I think it's reasonable that in the heat of the moment, with all the crazy stuff going on, Voldie didn't give a second thought to who told him about the spell. He might not have even remembered that it was Snape that told him that in the first place. Plus, he most likely double-checked to make sure it was a real spell himself. Not knowing about the cancer, he probably couldn't imagine that it would go wrong. Calculus sucks! My Calc teacher's so annoying! She yells at us all the time to pay attention. Lol.

Lady Abbey Bartlet: Lol, jumping around is good for you! I do it all the time, whenever I get some fun reviews like yours! Well, for Draco to confront his dad is the hardest thing he's ever had to do. He's confused about what he wants. He's been brainwashed to think he wants to become a Death Eater, but he's finally realizing that it's not something he truly wants. About Dumbledore, see author's note. He's always unprepared for stuff. Otherwise, there would have been a lot of bad things that wouldn't have happened to Harry. Harry still doesn't truly realize his self-worth. He doesn't understand that his life is worth as much as other people's. It's just part of his personality, something drilled in by his bastard family. The spell Voldie uses is what was explained in Chapter 25. I suggest rereading the last part or this all might seem rather confusing. That's cool with the symbolism of Harry's glasses. I think it's a great line! In my last chapter, I wanted my last sentence to be abrupt. Part of the effect I guess. But yours is great too. Yeah, sometimes I agree, fanfiction rules over canon. But I do love the real stuff too. Glad you liked the spitting in the face thing, I rather like that part myself. Happy Christmas to you too!

Pameruh qui aime malfoy: Voldie used the spell that would transfer Harry's life energy, powers, and, unknown to Voldie, his cancer as well. You could be onto something, or I could just want you all to finish reading this fic. I guess you'll see. Je dira rien. Yeah I had a French teacher who was German, who would just talk about nude beaches all the time. Pourquoi tu n'aime pas Harry? C'est un surprise! D'accord, avec la livre numero cinq, je peux la voir, parce qu'il n'a pas été très gentil. Je deteste les devoirs français. Bon chance avec ça!

HG/HrRFan4ever: Hmm...how about later so I can finish the fic first. It's just really not a convenient time for death at the moment. Your sister sounds like my brother. Whenever I read he looks scandalized. Erm, well, I didn't quite update as soon as you commanded, but it's here now!! Hopefully, the next chapter will be up a little sooner. Bertie Bott's Beans rock!!

AngelMorph: That is true. There was a lot of warning. I'm glad you liked last chapter. I'm glad you're not giving up either! I'd be so sad if all my readers left right before the end. Hope you haven't changed your mind.

ParanoiaIn2005: Phew, I'm glad you're not leaving. Lol, so many people have said I have some trick up my sleeve. Hmm...well, I don't see any tricks. I'll have to shake my sleeves and see if anything else falls out. (Don't read into that, this is just another one of my senseless rants). Standing ovation for Harry!! Sort of like the one for Hagrid at the end of the second movie. *shudder* I think that scene KILLED the movie. It was so bad. Anyways, I should make Harry live and say, "yeah, Sirius, you're cool and all, but let's just face it ParanoiaIn2005 is much cooler. I'm going with her" and then go and live with you. *takes a deep bow* Thank you!

BratPrincess-187: lol, Er...cliffies are my hobby! I should get a picture of a cliff and tape it to my computer to demonstrate the point. Lol. Please don't hurt me! I love that: er...nice try Snape! *one person stands up and claps* Well, hoped you liked the bit of angst in this chapter! More to come.

Mell5: Oh yes, death threats, or at least threats of pain and such. Lol. Well, Voldie's dead for you! Yeah, couldn't resist putting that bit of guilt for the student body in. I mean they turn on him so quickly at the slightest thing, maybe this will teach them not to be so judgmental and cruel. I don't think you're crazy. The Cruciatus curse is supposedly one of the most painful things to experience. Harry's only 15, he's not a robot! Whew, getting out of control again. Lol. Er, I'm not quite sure what you mean by the "in public" thing, but at least in this fic, Draco really didn't want to hurt Harry. I don't think he's really evil, even in the canon books, he's just been brought up to behave a

certain way, brainwashed to hate certain things, and is desperate to live up to his father's impossible expectations. Okay, another rant. I won't go into my whole detailed analysis of Draco's character. (I have several fairly detailed theories on the reasons for the way several characters are. They make people think I'm crazy, or sad. Lol.) I'm so glad you liked the Harry torture! I know I always do.

Maikafuiniel: That count to ten thing never works. I just get even madder by the time I reach ten. Lol, I always have to suppress my comments while reading fanfiction. I've had too many times when I've laughed and someone has come in to ask me what was so funny, and since I put up my school's website and say 'nothing', they begin to look at me funny. I hope to live long, as long as I'm not killed by a pack of raving fans with pitchforks.

Firemask: Best chapter yet? Thanks! Lol, Harry's death cheered you up? You're nearly as sadistic as I am. Not quite though, I reckon. Congrats on the guy! That's always fun. I made my Christmas presents too! I made pillows! They took me soooooo long, but they were cool.

Wiccan PussyKat: Of course I know you wouldn't abandon my fic! My loyal reader! I'm glad you liked last chapter! Oh, but aren't big cliffies fun? You could probably tell I think that from all the ones I have in this story. Lol, well, he is dead. I'm glad you liked the thing with Draco. It's my own statement that he isn't all bad, he's just been trained to be a baddie. It's not really him though! But I assure you that I will exercise some control and have him remain a bad guy in some of my future fics. Next chapter, I really will try to do soon, under a week, hopefully. No promises though, as always. As you said, why break habit?

ReflectionsOfReality: Evil? Me? Never! Lol. Well, sort of. I didn't notice that about my word count. I don't think it really counts though since my review responses and author's notes add so many words. That would be a cool fanfiction group contest thing. Of course I read other fanfiction, though I haven't had much time for it lately. Arg! I've been so busy. If I didn't read it, my favorites list wouldn't exist. I must say though that I'm somewhat picky. I try to get some variety in my reading, but I just browse favorite lists and such to find summaries

that really intrigue me. Summary: I am evil. Please don't hurt me. Locking the doors frantically. Wow, if you're right, I have a whole lot of readers. Slightly intimidated.

Ckat44: glad to hear of the shed tears. That always brightens my day in some twisted sort of way. I'm sorry you're a bit sad now though. Oh yes, I remember that now! Sorry, you'll have to forgive me for my scattered brain. It's been crazy lately. That story was so great! Congrats for the new story. I'll try to give it a read when I have the chance! I definitely hope to write another story. But I will probably take a month or so break after this one to write it. Thanks! I'm glad you think it's original!

Erin: Evil? Well, yes. Lol, I used to love the X-files. It got really crappy in its last few seasons though. Er...does the end of this chapter constitute as a cliffie? I'll make sure to watch out for peanut butter just in case. I'm thinking I might never be getting that cake.

Dadaiiro: Read the review response for Myr Halcyon for the Voldie thing. I guess most of your questions were answered by this chapter, and hopefully, new ones have formed. Yeah, Malfoy's really a sweetie at heart. Okay, that might be pushing it, but he's not evil!! Oh what a sad comment about the cancer, but you're right. He doesn't have it anymore. Lol, so many questions I can't answer, but I'll hopefully tie up all the loose ends soon. Don't worry about the last few chapters. I'm just glad I'm hearing from you now. Nail biter? Join the club.

Tati1: Oh man! Don't you HATE it when that happens? I guess it lost a bit of the element of surprise there then. Hope you liked it anyways.

Samara-chan: Er, well, yes. I did sort of kill him. I'm a little evil like that. I'm glad you liked the part about Draco and thought it was shocking! I love to surprise people! That's my favorite compliment I can get, that someone is completely surprised (in a good way) that something happened. It makes it more fun. Yup, Harry kicked Voldie's ass. Okay, well, not really since he sort of died, but still. Okay, definitely going to the website. I can't believe that movie doesn't creep you out. It always gets me in the middle of the night. I always start picture her standing behind me or next to my bed or

something. I have an overactive imagination that tends to freak me out.

Bulldogchik05: Cruel is my middle name! Well, actually, it's evil, but still. I'm glad you liked the battle! And Snape and Draco and Voldie trying to break him down, and all that jazz. He's so insecure! I always just want to hug him and tell him he's great! Exactly! Harry's always had his relatives put him down, and knows how Malfoy must be feeling. He's probably the one person there that could really understand and empathize. I think this an incident will, as you said, go a long way toward getting rid of house rivalries. There are still going to be some people who won't get along with others, but for the most part, this brought them together. Thank you for the long reviews! I love them and feel very special!

Chibi-Bex: Ooh, love this kidnapping idea! Sounds like great fun! Idea #4: We stick chewed gum in their dormmates beds, so in the morning, they can't get out. We set traps at their door so when Fred and George walk through it (and they are the only one who can since they aren't stuck to their beds) the rope wraps around their ankles and they can't run. Then we tie them up with the remaining rope and put them on brooms and fly through the halls of Hogwarts and out the front door. Then we celebrate by spraying silly string everywhere. Unfortunately, the guy who's playing Lupin is not what I would consider "soft handsome" :(Oh well, I already imagine the book characters completely different from the movie ones anyways, like the twins for example! Yay! I'm glad you're sticking with and that you're surprised a lot! I'm so glad!

Also thanks to Rain Warrior, AgiVega (well, I'm so happy you decided to give it a try.) biggi, Chris, veggy_gelfling (That's so awesome that I made you cry when no one else has! Score one for Celebony), Naomi, lightningwolf16, mockingbirdflyaway, i Hate you (er...sorry? lol), Jamie, Dumbledore (Thank you! I'm glad you like it! Lol, I will definitely try!), Helen (Of course you can print it out! If you really want to that is! But, as a warning, I think it might be around 300 pages with the review responses and all. Lots of paper! No, I don't think it will be done by then, hopefully New Years though.), Musicstarlover (he transferred the cancer, but he transferred his life energy as well, see Ch. 25 if you want it explained), Terence (yay, you rock! Talk to you

soon!), Sweet775 (Leukemia, but it affected him slightly different since he's a wizard.), xx Schizoid (Lol, well the rabid reviewers better wait to kill me until I finish the story or no one will ever know how it ends! Water drifter (of course I had to leave it there! It makes it more fun! Lol), Silver Phoenix Shadow87 (*pats Sirius comfortingly on the head* I hope you get better!), Romm (trying to make my readers cry? Never! *sly grin*), Dra, eav, Castical, Miss Shadow Prowl (lol, you think I'm a nice person after all the Harry torture in this fic? Er...you're one of few lol), Cestrel, gwenastar22 (I'm so glad you like the Harry/Voldie confrontation!), pennypacker (Malfoy's the best! He's awesome.), Shadowarwen, Arsenal, Cat, Maria, Catiechan (Hoped you liked the reactions!), fantagal (lol, er...I'm scared? Hahaha.), ChildOfDarkness (cool penname), Jay-Jay, AutumnBreeze, Blue Phoenix2, Holly, ER, W'rkacnter, Blackenedsoul, tessa, "crystal, lily, james, and sirius", Crystal113, LadyLilyPotter, ShawnPickett (thanks, glad you liked Draco! I've always felt bad for him.), Angela, Englishgirl (ooh, I am!! Very pleased), Kate Potter, Arctic Wolf2, Anonymous, Jedi-Bant, Ashes7, Charmed1, Maximum Poofy-Confused Queen (did you change your username again? Lol "it's awesome goodness in all its glory"? That's the greatest thing I've ever heard! Thanks! I think I'll print it out and hang it in my locker.) , Midoriliem, Shinigami's best friend, Katie, Mythology, Lourdes (I agree! I think J.K. might kill Harry. If she does, I will cry for a year), coolguy86 (thanks!), captuniv, Aphrodite, Serpent of Light (I hope JK does give Draco the 3-D characterization. It would prove me right among many people who scoff at me now when I say that he won't end up evil.), Lindiel Eryn, Mickeymoose (indeed. lol), Rhinemjr, SiriusWolf (no problem! Oh I'm glad Timeline was good! Well, at least you got to see Sirius freaking out afterward!), LizhowHP (I haven't seen that reaction too much! Glad to make you happy), Syvixxe, EriEka127, Ratgirl, angel74, BlackDiva, Kay's Shekinah (why do you hate Ginny so much? Just curious, don't worry, I'm not going to attack you for hating Ginny or anything lol. Which pairing do you like? H/Hr?), GrimmyD, Anora, Wynjara, MollyMorrison (Lol, patterns are meant to be broken.), PhoenixPadfoot89 (Kay, definitely locking the doors :), jedidiah, and charmed 3

Author's Note: ATTENTION!! THIS STORY IS NOT DONE YET!!!
Lol, yeah, I've gotten a lot of reviews that make it seem like some people think that last chapter was the last, but, as I guess it's obvious with the posting of this chapter, it was not. After this chapter, there will either be one or two chapters left. I really think only one, but I need to really revamp it. When this story is done, I will add Complete to the summary so you all will know and put a big THE END at the end, alright? Phew, now that that's out of the way, how is everyone? To all the people the last few chapters that Dumbledore shouldn't have been surprised, you are right. He was caught by surprise a bit when the attack happened, but on the other hand, (and I forgot to point this out last chapter) he knew about Harry and Snape's plan with the spell. In a way he wanted Voldie to come so Harry could kill him. Not that he wanted Harry to die and wasn't upset by it, but it really was the only way and Harry was going to die anyways. This chapter is probably my longest yet, so enjoy. I want to dedicate this chapter to the person that IMed me the other day. My computer kicked me off and I didn't know your screenname, so I couldn't IM you back. I'm very sorry, but I really did appreciate the IM!! Alright, on with the story, and PLEASE review at the end of the chapter. They help me write!! Really they do! And I love them, they feed my self-esteem!!

* * * * *

The next day, Hogwarts was the epitome of chaos. All classes and tests had been canceled. The house elves were being distracted by the painful wails that had been emitting from Dobby ever since he had discovered the news. Owls had been sent out the night before and parents were demanding to take their children home. Reporters were hounding Dumbledore like an angry mob. The ministry was buzzing around interrogating Death Eaters with Veritaserum and taking them off to Azkaban. Experts were called in to assure the minister that the corpse was indeed that of the Dark Lord. Soon that was taken away, though nobody was quite sure what the ministry was going to do with it. Nobody wanted his body buried near their homes.

The ministry tried to take Harry's body as well, asking who wanted to make the funeral arrangements, but Dumbledore refused to let anyone take it and promised to contact them later about the matter.

Professor McGonagall hauled out and smacked Professor Trelawney with pure unadulterated fury when she had boasted about predicting the boy's death. The head of Gryffindor leapt at the other professor and began pulling her hair when the other professors broke it up. As they pulled her out of the room, she screamed, "If she can predict the future so well, why didn't she predict that one, eh?" as the Divination professor held her cheek in shock.

Professor Flitwick led her from the room, praising her for the long overdue wake-up call to the idiotic Divination professor, after getting her a strong cup of tea.

The Weasley's parents showed up hysterical as well, demanding that Dumbledore himself tell them exactly what had happened. When he was done, Mrs. Weasley cried for a half and hour straight before asking to see Harry's body. Dumbledore led Mr. and Mrs. Weasley into his private chambers, thankful that he had had the foresight to put a preservation charm on the boy.

They walked in to find Sirius sitting in a chair staring blankly at his godson. Remus was sitting beside him, whispering comforting things to Sirius, being the only one of the two who acknowledged the Weasleys' presence. He looked up and solemnly nodded.

They walked over. Harry's body was lying on Dumbledore's huge bed, making the boy look even smaller than he was. Mrs. Weasley stared down at the face of the innocent boy that she had begun to think of as one of her own.

She gently traced the lightening scar on his forehead with her fingers. She then bent down and kissed his forehead lightly, her tears dripping into his black hair.

"You've always made us proud, Harry. Always," she whispered before standing back up, wiping away her tears.

"How are you holding up, Sirius?" Mr. Weasley asked gently. Sirius looked up at them with a blank expression and just stared for a few seconds.

"I didn't even get to say goodbye," he whispered, before breaking down in sobs, burying his face in his hands. Remus rubbed his back comfortingly, a sad look in his own eyes. The Weasleys looked at him helplessly. Mrs. Weasley turned to Dumbledore.

"I need to see my children now," she demanded, a slightly frantic look in her eye.

"And Hermione, as well, if her parents haven't arrived yet," Mr. Weasley added.

"The Grangers arrived a few moments ago and are in my office. I'm sure you remember the way to the Gryffindor common room. The password is Thotheka. Take the back way to avoid reporters," he said. Mr. Weasley paused before stepping back into the office.

"Have the Stensons been told?" he asked.

"Not yet. I'm ashamed to say they slipped my mind, along with the Dursleys," Dumbledore said with a sigh. "It's been very hectic."

"Don't worry, Albus, after I go with Molly to see the kids, I'll go inform them both myself," Mr. Weasley offered sadly.

"Thank you, Arthur, that would be a great help. The Stensons will be quite upset, I'm sure."

"Along with the Dursleys. I couldn't imagine losing a child I'd raised. I mean, I know they didn't always get on too well with Harry, but oh Merlin, they'll probably be devastated," Mrs. Weasley said wiping away a few more tears.

Dumbledore had a grim look and said nothing. They stepped into his office and met up with the Grangers who looked quite worried. The headmaster waved away a rather large portrait to reveal a staircase.

They solemnly nodded their good-byes and followed the house elf along with the Grangers.

When, at last, they passed the sniffing Fat Lady (“He was so young,” she said tearfully.) and burst through the Gryffindor portal, they saw the Weasley children, along with Hermione, all mutely gazing into the fire. Their eyes were red and puffy from crying with slight circles from not sleeping the night before. At the call of their parents, they all turned their dazed expressions toward them, except for Ron who continued to stare blankly into the dancing flames.

The Grangers ran over and began comforting their daughter. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley glanced at each other making a silent decision. Mrs. Weasley rushed over and swept up Fred, George, and Ginny, who began crying again in the comforting arms of their mother. Mr. Weasley put his hand on his youngest son’s shoulder. Ron looked up in a dazed but slightly surprised expression as if he hadn’t realized that his parents had arrived. He looked around taking in his surroundings.

“Ron, let’s go for a walk,” he suggested softly. Ron’s expression pained, remembering Harry requesting the same thing to talk about Ron’s crush on Hermione.

He numbly rose and followed his father out of the tower and down to the lake, where nobody else was. He looked around, remembering all the water fights, drinking pumpkin juice while dangling their feet in the water, and even the second task, when he had found out that he was the person Harry would miss the most. He saw the Quidditch pitch in the distance, recalling how Harry’s eyes had lit up every time the sport was mentioned and their plans to play over the summer.

“Ron?”

Ron looked up at his father through a daze. He saw a confused man, unsure what to say. What could possibly be said?

Mr. Weasley was trying to conjure up something comforting to say, when Ron spoke.

“You know, I think he felt guilty about always coming over to our house. He never had anywhere he could invite us.” He paused, looking at the Quidditch pitch again. “He was going to have a home

this summer and invite me over to play Quidditch.” There was another pause. “He never bragged about Quidditch even though he was so obviously good. He never bragged about anything. He never wanted to be famous,” he said as though really realizing it for the first time.

“No, Harry was something special,” Mr. Weasley added softly. Ron hugged his father and felt the man’s arms wrap around him. He began to cry softly as his father embraced him.

“It’s so lonely without him. Like there’s something missing,” he whispered, “and it hurts so bad.”

Eventually, the two made their way back up to the Gryffindor common room. Hermione’s parents had left after their daughter had denied the offer to take her home. They had all decided to stay at Hogwarts until the end of the year, which was only a week away. Mr. Weasley also said goodbye, as he was going to go to Privet Drive to inform the Dursleys and the Stensons of Harry’s death.

Now the four Weasley children, Mrs. Weasley, and Hermione were all sitting around the fire with the common room to themselves.

“Maybe it’s better this way,” Ron said softly. George looked up at Ron painfully.

“What do you mean?” Ginny asked quizzically. She had expected that.

Ron looked up at his sister. “Harry was dying.”

There was a long pause as everyone absorbed the information.

“What?” Fred asked, shocked.

“He was going to die soon, before the end of the month,” Ron said numbly. “He didn’t want anyone to know because he didn’t want people to treat him differently or feel sorry for him.”

“Even us?” George choked out.

“Especially you,” Hermione responded. “You were three people who he was close to that made him so happy. He said that when he was around you guys, he could temporarily forget the bad stuff. Like he was living rather than dying,” she said quietly, fingering the bracelet Harry and Ron had gotten her for her birthday the previous year.

But I don’t understand! What do you mean he was dying?” Ginny asked in disbelief.

“You know Mr. Stenson?” Ron asked his family. They all responded with nods. “Well, he had this fatal Muggle illness called cancer and Harry could only find a spell to transfer it, not cure it, so, being Harry, he did the stupid spell to take the cancer himself and let Mr. Stenson live.”

Everyone looked appropriately stunned.

“Wait, this was something he chose to do? B-but how could he do that? How could he act like Mr. Stenson was more important than him?” asked George shakily.

Ron and Hermione both shut their eyes tightly for several seconds, trying to hold back the tears.

“Because he believed that Mr. Stenson was more important. He said that Mr. Stenson had a family who needed him, like that justified it all. He—he didn’t think anyone would really care if it were him to die instead,” he choked out, before breaking down once again in sobs. The rest of the Weasleys were too horrified to comfort him. Ron took a few shuddering breaths to regain his composure. “I don’t even know if he ever believed any different, no matter how much we tried.”

“It was his family, I’m sure of it,” Hermione added, tears sliding down her own cheeks. “They taught him that he was worthless, that nobody would ever care. We didn’t have enough time to undo the damage. I mean, how much time does it take to undo something like that?”

“Wha-at?” Mrs. Weasley sobbed in horror. “How could he think that? He was like part of the family! Oh no, we should have taken him in

more often. If I'd have known he thought that, we could have adopted him, we could've...."

"Mum, please don't," said Fred in an almost tortured tone. "I don't want to think of what we could have or should have done to make things different. It won't change anything now."

"Oh Merlin," whispered Ginny painfully. "Was it really bad?"

"He had some really awful days," Hermione added. "One time he collapsed in the hall. I thought that was it, and it almost was. I knew deep down that one time he wouldn't just come back, but he's escaped death so many times, I just couldn't help but hope that he'd do it again and that we'd still be able to celebrate his next birthday. You know? Just keep being the Boy-Who-Lived."

"I always wanted to throw him a little birthday party," Mrs. Weasley sniffed. "I don't think those relatives of his ever gave him a very good one."

Ron glowered. "The Dursleys never celebrated his birthday at all. They just gave him old socks and hangers when he was little before ignoring it all together."

"What scum," George said shaking his head.

"You have no idea," Ron muttered angrily.

"Did any of you know about the tutoring?" Ginny asked quietly.

"You mean how he was tutoring Eloise and Neville in potions?" Ron asked blankly.

This made Ginny smile. "So he kept his word," she said with a reminiscent look about her. "A while ago, right before the ball, I was in the library, having some trouble with my Muggle Studies, nearing a nervous breakdown because I couldn't understand it. The next thing I knew, Harry was there, asking what was wrong and offering to tutor me since he grew up with Muggles and he promised me he wouldn't tell anyone since I didn't want him to. I can tell that he didn't."

"No, he never told me about that." Ron said, a hint of pride in his voice for his friend's loyalty to his word.

Fred and George looked at each other. George nodded.

"You know our private investor for the joke shop?" Fred asked.

Mrs. Weasley gasped. "No," she said in disbelief.

"Yup, Harry threatened to hex us if we didn't take his tournament winnings for the joke shop."

"He told us not to let Mum know where we got it and he told us to buy Ron some new dress robes and say it was from us," George added. "That's why we gave him samples of all our new pranks for his birthday and Christmas."

The other members of the Weasley family had their mouths wide open. Hermione wasn't all that surprised. She knew that Harry didn't want the money and had wanted to find a way to give it to the Weasleys. She had been suspicious when she had first heard about the private investor, and now her suspicions had been proven correct.

"But that was a thousand galleons!" Mrs. Weasley gasped in shock.

"I know. We reminded him of that when he gave it to us, but he didn't want it. I don't think he could stand the memory associated with it. He said he thought everyone would need some laughs more than usual," Fred explained.

"The little dear," Mrs. Weasley said affectionately, wiping away some tears.

"So that's why he was laughing," Ron mused. "I asked him what moron would give money to Fred and George and he just laughed and said he thought it sounded like a good investment."

Everyone laughed, some through their tears.

"I'm really going to miss him," George said fondly.

"Yeah, you should have seen him, Mum. He saved this girl's life from Voldemort. He practically sacrificed himself for the school," Fred added.

"That's exactly what he did," Mrs. Weasley said. He explained to them exactly what Dumbledore had told him. Ron and Hermione already knew this, since Dumbledore had explained it to them after the attack, explaining that it Harry had to keep it a secret from everyone, even them, to make sure the plan wasn't spilt at the last moment by some outcry. At first, everyone was mad at Dumbledore, but as Ron and Hermione had done, the rest realized that it wasn't his fault. That it was Harry's decision in knowing that he was going to die soon anyway.

They heard footsteps coming down from the boys' staircase. They looked up to find Colin Creevey coming down the stairs with a small box in his hands, eyes puffy and red from crying. He had just lost his hero.

He walked up to the group and faced Ron and Hermione.

"Dennis and I thought you might want these," he said with a hiccup, thrusting the box at Hermione. "You were very lucky to have been his friend," he sniffed. He quickly turned around and ran back up the stairs.

Hermione lifted the lid of the box and had to choke back a sob. The box was filled with pictures of Harry and them. Everyone gathered around the small coffee table as Hermione began to take the pictures out one by one and set them on the table. There were multiple ones of the trio, arms around each other's shoulders, laughing and waving. There was one from a distance from the day Harry and Ron had had their water fight. Ron pushed Harry in the lake and Harry laughed, splashing him back and running after him with the pot of water. Another with the two sitting at the lake with their feet in, chatting away. Silent tears dripped down Ron's face.

She pulled out more pictures of Harry in his Quidditch robes, flying in matches. There were pictures of the party after winning the cup. The picture of Ron happily called the little chant they had done and then turned and pulled Harry up onto the stage before jumping down, both of them grinning broadly.

“That was the Quidditch Cup party,” Ginny explained to her mum.

There were some more pictures of that day, with Harry saving Malfoy; Harry being carried off to the hospital wing; Harry being pulled through the porthole to the common room by the twins who each put an arm around his shoulders with cheery grins; Harry and Ginny walking with their arms around each other’s shoulders and the pair talking together.

Then there were pictures of the dance. Kota messing up Harry’s hair and him swatting her hand away indignantly.

There was a picture at dinner where Harry whispered something to Ron and they both sniggered behind their hands. Ron desperately wished he remembered what Harry had said.

There was Eloise and Harry making funny faces at the camera and then some of them dancing together, Eloise laughing as Harry twirled her around. There were some of the other couples as well.

“Oh you look so handsome Ron, and you look beautiful Hermione,” Mrs. Weasley said tearfully. “Oh and Fred, George, you two look wonderful.”

Hermione pulled out the next picture and when setting it on the table, Ginny burst out in a sob before biting back her tears. It was her and Harry dancing cheek to cheek. Her picture-self was obviously on cloud nine. Harry was smiling peacefully, slightly stroking Ginny’s hair, oblivious to the camera. In the background, there was George and Kota watching the two as they danced, grinning with glee and sneaking glances over at someone out of the picture, who they guessed was Fred. Ginny was entranced with the picture, along with Mrs. Weasley, who Ginny had always talked to about her crush on Harry.

“Oh sweetie,” she whispered tearfully as she hugged Ginny to her side.

Ron pulled out the next few pictures, one with Harry and the twins walking through Hogsmeade, Harry wrapped in Fred's cloak. The twins' throats tightened as they remembered their time with the boy they considered a second little brother. Now Harry's reluctance to talk about summer in that conversation made sense, and it hurt them to think that Harry knew for so long that his time was quickly running out.

Hermione pulled out the next picture, of Harry and Ginny sleeping on the couch in the Gryffindor common room. Ginny looked at the picture fondly. She told the story behind the picture, also explaining that it was her that had set up the Cho spectacle earlier in the day.

“You did that?” George asked in awe.

“What did Harry say?” Fred asked curiously.

“He said...” she took a deep breath to get control of her emotions, “he said he thought you'd be proud of me.”

George pulled her into a hug. “He was a very smart guy.”

Everybody winced at the use of the past tense in describing Harry, who, just the day before, had been alive.

“It's not fair,” Ginny said quietly, picking up the picture of her and Harry sleeping. “It shouldn't have been Harry. I mean, hadn't he done enough already?”

They went through the remaining pictures, of the huge war for the camera in the common room after the Weasleys and Hermione had found Harry and Ginny on the couch together. The pictures were so recent, yet they seemed ages old. It was hard to believe that only the day before, Harry had been alive.

The last picture in the box was the most recent, with the trio asleep in Harry's bed just the previous week.

"You guys weren't all sick on that day, were you," George asked quietly, yet it wasn't really a question.

Ron shook his head mournfully. "Just Harry. A really bad day for him. We couldn't leave him like that."

"Nobody had ever taken care of him when he was sick before! Can you believe that? It was kind of cute though. He was so embarrassed with all of us taking care of him; it was like he didn't even know how to act," Hermione said wistfully.

"How could he just leave like that?" Ron asked looking at the pictures, eyes welling up with tears again. "How could they just take him away?"

Ron put his head in his hands and began to sob once again. Hermione slid an arm over his shoulders and let her own tears fall onto Ron's back.

Meanwhile, Mr. Weasley had Apparated to the edge of Privet drive and gravely made his way to Number four. He knocked on the door softly, hearing heavy footsteps on the other side.

The door swung open to reveal Harry's Uncle, who was wearing a hat that looked a bit awkward, as was pulled down quite far on his head. His expression, upon realizing who exactly was at his door, turned furious. He looked around quickly to make sure none of the neighbors would see this strange man at his door.

"What are you doing here?" he hissed angrily.

"I have some bad news, is your wife at home? I think you both might want to hear this," he said, trying to keep his calm.

"Well, come inside," Uncle Vernon said after an internal debate. "Come on, quickly now, before the neighbors see" he said in an annoyed tone, impatiently gesturing for the redhead to come in,

closing the door quickly behind him. "God can't you people dress normal?" he added under his breath. Mr. Weasley looked down at his clothes. He was dressed like a Muggle, though his clothes were worn and perhaps a bit mismatched. He had found nothing wrong with them.

"Petunia, you'd better get in here. One of those people are here," he called, spitting out the word 'people' as if the word was too good for what he was describing. He eyed Mr. Weasley suspiciously, as if the man would attack at any second.

"People? What are you talking about, darling?" she asked, coming out of the kitchen, also wearing a hat. In seeing Mr. Weasley, her expression went from falsely cheery to cold. "What are you here for? Did the boy get into some sort of trouble?" she asked with annoyance.

Mr. Weasley took a deep breath through his nose to calm himself. He knew Harry's relatives were rude from their last meeting, but this was just ridiculous. He reminded himself of why he was there.

"Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, you may want to sit down," he said grimly. "I have some bad news."

"Look, I'm quite busy, so just tell us this bit of news so we can get on with our day, all right?" Vernon asked impatiently.

"Well, I'm sure Harry's told you about You-Know-Who, or, er...I guess you'd know him as...um...Voldemort, since that's what Harry calls him," he said, shuddering slightly at the name.

"Who is this? Another one of the boy's freak friends? Get to the point," Uncle Vernon said, crossing his chubby arms. Mr. Weasley gaped at them.

"Harry never told you about the Dark Lord? The one that killed his parents and has been after him for years?" he asked, trying to jog their memories.

Aunt Petunia shrugged, almost looking bored.

“Oh, well, he’s a dark wizard who...” started Mr. Weasley.

“Don’t say that word under my roof!” yelled Uncle Vernon.

“What word?” Mr. Weasley asked, completely confused.

“I think you should leave,” Harry’s uncle said furiously, starting for the door.

“Look, I’m not sure what I said to offend you, but please hear me out. It’s about Harry,” he said desperately. Uncle Vernon stopped and reluctantly turned to listen. “Listen, as I was saying this man’s been after Harry for years, and, I really don’t know how to tell you this, but last night, he broke through the wards at Hogwarts. Harry fought him and protected the entire school. Your nephew made a tremendous sacrifice. He brought down the Dark Lord, but he could only do it by giving up his own life. I’m so sorry.”

The pair looked at him, stunned.

“The boy’s dead?” Aunt Petunia asked in surprise.

“Yes, I’m terribly sorry. Harry was almost like a son to me. My kids are devastated and I know this must be hard, but if you need anyone to talk to, we’re here. I’m sure we’re only feeling a fraction of the grief you must be...”

“Wait, he can’t be dead!” Uncle Vernon said angrily.

“I know, that’s what I thought at first. It just seemed like Harry was invincible, but he really was just a fifteen year old boy,” Mr. Weasley said sadly.

“No, you don’t understand. Listen, we had a bit of a run in with one of you and they gave us these horrible ears and tails, and we were going to have the boy undo them this summer. If he’s not coming back, then you’ve got to take them off,” Uncle Vernon explained menacingly.

"Please, I haven't been able to go out anywhere without these bloody hats. You don't know how hard it is!" Aunt Petunia pleaded.

Mr. Weasley looked at them in disbelief. "Do you understand what I just said? Harry, your nephew that you've raised since he was one, is dead. He was murdered last night. Don't you understand that?" he asked incredulously.

"Yes, we bloody understand. We're not idiots. That's a real shame. Now can you remove these bloody things?" said Uncle Vernon impatiently.

Mr. Weasley looked at them in disgust. "Your nephew's dead and all you can think of is how you look? This is Harry, perhaps one of the kindest, bravest kids in the world. It was an honor that you were entrusted with his care, just because of the wonderful person he was. I felt proud that my son picked such a wonderful person as a friend. There are people all over Britain that have never even met Harry that are crying over his death, and you don't even care!" he shouted.

"Hey, don't you lecture us!" Vernon yelled, his face purpling. "You don't know what it was like, raising that wretched freak. We had to feed him and clothe him put a roof over his head out of the goodness of our hearts, with our own money, and he was nothing but an ungrateful little brat! At least now, we don't have to deal with him anymore!"

Mr. Weasley was practically shaking with rage. "How DARE you talk about Harry that way." He held himself back from attacking Harry's relatives and lowered his voice slightly, though keeping the glare on his face. "Where are Harry's things?"

"What things?" Aunt Petunia spat. Mr. Weasley rolled his eyes in frustration.

"His things that he doesn't take to Hogwarts with him. Clothes, old toys, books, you know. His things," he explained as if talking to a couple of morons. He couldn't help it, he was so angry. "The people who actually cared about him, will want them."

Harry's aunt and uncle exchanged a look.

"If we give them to you, will you take off these things?" Vernon asked, gesturing toward his head, which was still covered in a hat.

"Fine," he said in annoyance.

Aunt Petunia stepped to the side and pointed toward the door to the cupboard under the stairs. "If he has anything, it'll be in there," she said impatiently.

"What about in his room?" Mr. Weasley asked.

The Dursleys exchanged another look.

"He got the right to a room revoked. We already went through there, and there's nothing of his," Uncle Vernon explained cautiously.

Mr. Weasley looked at them without comprehension at what Vernon meant exactly. He shook his head and stepped up to the door, unlocked the deadbolt on it and swung open the door. Inside, he found not the boxes of Harry's possessions, as he had expected, but instead, along with some cleaning materials, there was a small cot with a ratty sheet on top of it. There was a small box with a couple of Harry's Muggle shirts and socks, all filled with tears and holes. Stuffed in a corner was an old teddy bear, missing an arm and an eye, with a few letter D's scribbled on it in large black marker, which in turn had red marker scribbled on top. Mr. Weasley could guess that Harry's cousin had gotten to the toy and had tried to mark it as his own, and Harry had later tried to scribble the markings out.

There were a few books for younger kids in the same corner, but had the name "Dudley" written on the covers. On top of the pile was a small box of Bertie Botts Every Flavor Beans and an old chocolate frog, along with a note with Ron's handwriting saying "Harry, don't even think about opening this until Christmas, or else!! Hope you're having a good holiday! —Ron."

"This is where he slept?" he asked furiously, taking in the small cupboard. "You KEPT him here?" He reached in and grabbed the

bear and the note, putting them both in the box with his few clothes when something caught his eye.

He looked into the box and pulled out the bottom shirt. It was covered in dark stains. He looked curiously at the bed and saw the same stains covering the sheets, pillow, and the small bed in general. He looked around and noticed that even the floor had these stains on it. He pulled out his wand.

“Lumos,” he said quietly and light illuminated the small room. He knew immediately from the reddish-brown color of the stains exactly what they were: blood.

He backed up out of the covered shakily. He spun around to face the Dursleys, holding up Harry’s bloody shirt.

“What did you do to him?” he asked menacingly.

The two stared at his wand in fright, saying nothing.

“You—you abused him, didn’t you?” he asked, voice shaking with fury. “You HURT him!”

“N-now wait a second. You don’t go accusing us. That brat made me lose my job! He ruined our lives! Our lives were perfect before he was dropped on our doorstep! You don’t know what it’s like!” Vernon insisted, taking a step back.

Mr. Weasley looked around their house, for the first time noticing the huge pictures of the Dursley family and their son, not a single one containing Harry. He looked back at the cupboard door, the heavy locks on the outside taking on a new meaning.

“You’re monsters. You don’t deserve to live,” he said, his voice dripping with disdain. Both the Dursley’s eyes flew to his wand. They both obviously thought he was really going to kill them.

“It was Vernon. It was all Vernon. I tried to stop him, but he’s so scary when he’s drunk, you’ve got to understand!” Aunt Petunia

shrieked, stepping away from her husband while pointing an accusing finger at him. Uncle Vernon's jaw dropped.

"What the hell are you doing, Petunia?"

"Listen, don't kill me, it was all him. I couldn't stop him and his drunken rages. I had to protect my son!"

"Bullshit! Who was the one closing up all the window blinds so the neighbors wouldn't see? You're the one who came up with the brilliant idea to make the cupboard his room, remember?" Uncle Vernon said accusingly.

"I don't know what he's talking about," she said to Mr. Weasley. "He—he's the one who beat the boy! I had no part in that."

"Oh, don't you go accusing me of it all," Uncle Vernon bellowed. "You're the one who wouldn't let him have any food and gave him all those bloody chores. You starve the boy and work him halfway to death, and then you blame me? Oh, that's rich."

"Oh yeah?" Aunt Petunia shrieked, "Who's the one who threw him through our coffee table? Or put a gun to his head and kidnapped him from those stupid Stenson people. Or stabbed him? You're the reason we got in trouble with that man! You're the reason we got these damn things in the first place!" she screamed, gesturing toward her head.

Mr. Weasley watched the pair rat each other out in horrible shock. How had all of this happened without Harry telling them?

Aunt Petunia turned to Mr. Weasley. "He did it all! He beat the boy! I couldn't stop him! See, you can see the bloodstain right there on the carpet. It's right there!"

Mr. Weasley felt sick as he saw a large, faded, reddish-brown stain on the carpet, only feet from where he was standing.

"It was Vernon! That's where he sta—"

“You double-crossing bitch!” Vernon bellowed. “Like you had any problem with it! You’re the one that kept insisting that we needed to crush all that freakish nonsense out of him!”

“ENOUGH!” Mr. Weasley roared, unsure if he could stand another word. He felt extremely nauseous and quite shaky. He couldn’t stand being in the house any longer. “I suggest you tell me where the Stensons live this instant.”

“They’re at number nine,” Aunt Petunia said quietly, her eye resting back on the wand.

“How could you? He was just a boy!,” he said furiously. “You two are in so much trouble I can’t even begin to tell you. Don’t even bother running, it will make us angrier and we’ll find you. You’d better pray you get your soul sucked out of you by a Dementor before Harry’s godfather gets his hands on you. I would kill you myself if I could stand to be in the same house as you for a minute longer without vomiting. I suggest you start praying to any god you can think of for forgiveness, because I assure you, the wizarding world will show you no compassion,” he said, his voice dripping acidly. He grabbed the small box of Harry’s things and walked out the door, shooting one last disgusted scowl at the two before slamming the door behind him.

He was shaking as he walked down the street to number nine, feeling a bit dazed. He couldn’t believe what he had just heard and was still trying to absorb the information

He clutched the box under one arm and walked up to the Stenson’s front door. He took a calming breath as he rang the doorbell. He stood on the doorstep, hoping for a more upset reaction.

Mrs. Stenson opened the door. Upon realizing who it was, a big smile crossed her face.

“Oh, Arthur! How are you? Here, come on in!” she said excitedly, opening up the door and gesturing for him to come in.

He nodded with a sad smile and stepped inside. Upon seeing Mr. Weasley's solemn expression, Mrs. Stenson immediately became worried.

"Arthur, is everything all right?" she asked, shutting the door behind him.

"Are Rick and Dakota home? I have some bad news," Mr. Weasley said sadly.

Mrs. Stenson's face went pale as she realized what the news would probably be.

"K-Kota, Rick," she called up the stairs, "Come down please. Arthur Weasley's here." She led Mr. Weasley into the living room as her husband and daughter came down the stairs.

"Hey Mr. Weasley...is something wrong?" Kota said, freezing at seeing the look on his face.

"Is something wrong with Harry?" Mr. Stenson asked with something akin to panic in his eyes. His eyes flicked to the box under Mr. Weasley's arm.

Mr. Weasley took a shuddering breath as a tear escaped his eye. He wiped it quickly away and set the box down.

"I—I have some bad news."

"Oh God no," gasped Kota. "He's not..."

"Please, sit down."

"No, no, no, no," Mrs. Stenson said, shaking her head as she sunk down onto the couch. Mr. Stenson and Kota joined her, both looking extremely frightened.

"Please tell me he's not dead," Kota pleaded desperately. Mr. Weasley lowered his gaze.

“Oh God. Oh God,” Mr. Stenson said miserably.

“I’m sorry. Last night he...” he trailed off, not being able to say the words. Kota’s breathing became erratic with grief and panic. Mrs. Stenson burst into tears.

“Oh God, it should have been me,” Mr. Stenson moaned.

“It wasn’t—it wasn’t the cancer,” Mr. Weasley said, swallowing a lump in his throat. The three heads shot up and looked at him in confusion. “You know about the dark wizard who was after him.”

“That Voldemort person?” Mrs. Stenson asked, remembering Kota relating the story to her.

“Yes. He’s been after Harry for awhile. I don’t think even Harry knew how horrible of a wizard You-Kno...Voldemort was. I mean, Harry was just one year old when he brought him down the first time. He never really knew of the horrible things the Dark Lord did, the fear he caused. But, last night, Voldemort managed to break into Hogwarts. Of course, Harry, being Harry, sacrificed his own life to bring down the Dark Lord. He killed Voldemort, but not before Voldemort killed Harry,” Mr. Weasley explained with much difficulty.

Dakota stared at Mr. Weasley for a few seconds before she stood up and ran up the stairs. The three adults heard a door slam above them. Mrs. Stenson quickly followed her.

“I just came from the Dursleys,” Mr. Weasley said slowly, watching for the other man’s reaction. Sure enough, Mr. Stenson scowled deeply at their name.

“Those bastards,” he spat quietly.

Mr. Weasley nodded. “Did you know about...” He didn’t know how to phrase the question, but both pairs of eyes fell on the box of Harry’s things, and the bloody shirt that was laying on top.

“The abuse?”

Mr. Weasley nodded miserably. "You knew? How?"

"Pure chance that we found out, really. Harry hid it frighteningly well. Last summer, Kota grabbed his shoulder or something and he jumped so she pulled down his shirt collar and saw the bruises. I made him take his shirt off. There were these bruises everywhere and you could tell it wasn't just a recent incident. He had handprint-shaped bruises on his neck for God's sakes! Like he had been strangled or something. I almost killed his uncle for that and probably should have. It would have kept all that other stuff from happening," he said with a distressed sigh.

"Other stuff?" Mr. Weasley asked weakly.

Mr. Stenson looked up at the redhead sorrowfully. "Do you remember when we ran into you at Hogwarts?"

"Yeah," he said, bringing up the memory. He shut his eyes tightly in realization. "He had that cut and bruise on his face. That wasn't his cousin. It was his uncle."

"No, and it wasn't the worst of his injuries."

Mr. Weasley looked up at him, not sure if he really could stomach knowing the rest, but needing to know nonetheless. "What did they do to him?"

"Apparently, Harry's uncle got fired from his job. The rumor is that he kept showing up to meetings drunk and made a fool of the company in front of some important clients, but anyways, he blamed Harry. Thought he did it using magic," Mr. Stenson explained.

"You can't do something like that with magic!" Mr. Weasley interjected.

"Well, you know that, and Harry knows that, but Harry's uncle didn't know that and wouldn't listen to reason. He just lost it and attacked Harry. He stabbed him in the stomach with a kitchen knife, and from what I was told by Mr. Snape, he was about to stab him again when Mr. Snape luckily, by some miracle, got there in time."

“Professor Snape?” Mr. Weasley asked in surprise.

“Yeah, he somehow had found out about some other instance of abuse that Harry hasn’t told us about and knew to go check on him, thank God. I mean, Jesus, Harry very nearly died that night, he lost so much blood! How could someone treat somebody like that? Especially a kid, a kid they raised! How could somebody do that to Harry?” he asked, shaking his head dolefully.

“Merlin,” Mr. Weasley whispered. “Oh Harry, why didn’t you say something?”

“He was apparently a very secretive kid. He must have felt like he had to take on everybody else’s problems on himself. It was like he didn’t want anyone he cared about to go through any pain, but thought it was okay to take it all on himself. I couldn’t believe it when I found out he had taken on my cancer himself. What was he thinking? He was just fifteen! He hadn’t even begun to live yet.”

“Well, everyone was always telling him he was supposed to be a hero. And he must have thought he was worthless because of what his relatives did to him. The two put together are not a good combination,” Mr. Weasley said regretfully.

“The two of those put together is Harry,” Mr. Stenson said sadly. Mr. Weasley nodded.

The two men sat in silence while upstairs Kota sobbed into her mother’s trembling shoulder.

Meanwhile, in the dungeons of Hogwarts, Professor Snape held up a beaker filled with an emerald green potion. There was no way to test it. In theory, it could work, but there was only one shot. If it failed, then all hope would be lost.

A/N: Oh, quick question. Does anybody know if Author Alerts are free or do you have to pay for them? I’m very confused! Oh and to all that were confused as to where the scene that Snape was

referring to at the end of last chapter was, it doesn't exist. It was a reference to something offstage so-to-speak. You aren't supposed to know what Dumbledore told Snape, though you will find out eventually.

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Lady Sapphira Serpens: Lol, thanks! I can't believe you started crying in the middle of class just thinking of my story!! That's the coolest thing I've ever heard!! Well, a bit embarrassing for you perhaps, but brilliant for me!! Woo hoo!! Thanks about the whole career in writing thing. That would be my dream, but it would be a bit hard stepping away from the Harry Potter characters. One day though....*trails off dreamily*

Steff: Well, hey! Yeah, so you should definitely write that fic you talked about. Good luck with it! I'm glad you like this fic! Hope you continue to do so. I'll hopefully talk to you soon!

Texasjeanette: Man!! That is a long period of reading! 5:30 in the morning? Holy crap! Well, thank you!! I'm so glad you got drawn into my story so much!! Wow, I can't believe you were crying so hard! That's a huge compliment to me as a writer!! I'm so happy you liked Severus! He was really my hardest character and the one I was trying hardest to portray realistically. Lol, wow, just thank you so much for such a wonderful review! I printed it out and read it to my sister and is going to be taped to my writing notebook!

Serpent of Light: Thank you!! Lol, I picture so many scenes as a movie! I have this perfect vision in my head of several of the scenes, but especially the hospital wing conversation with Ron and Harry and the final battle scene. Ooh...I like the bit about slow motion! New pictures are beginning to form. Niiice. Thanks for putting me on your favorites! That's so awesome! I do hope you read it again once in awhile! That would be beyond cool. Have a happy holiday and a happy New Year, yourself!!

Chibi-Bex: lol, glad you found it sad, since it was supposed to be lol. Wait, I'm curious to what your theories are about Snape's behavior, though I'm not sure if it's obvious or not now. I love the idea of

getting Peeves in on it. He's so cool, especially in the 5th book!! Okay, idea #6: Plant the silly string on the twins and secretly tell Filch. When they get brought into Filch's office, we'll be there (as Filch's "informants" he will trust us). We'll offer the twins some gum, which will really be portkeys to the Shrieking Shack, where we will quickly also portkey. Then, with the rope, we will tie their wrists to ours so they can't get away and walk straight to a chapel where we can get married!! On the way, however, we will wow them with our good senses of humor and our obvious intelligence for pulling this prank off. Then, when we take off the rope, they won't run!! Lol, Happy New Year!!

Lady Abbey Bartlet: I hoped you continued to like the reactions this chapter. I'm glad you thought everyone was in character!! Eloise and Neville? I thought a bit about it, but no, too predictable. They're just friends in distress. They've become really good friends this year. I definitely did not mean to say that Dumbledore's incompetent. He's very far from that!! I'm not even quite sure what he said, but I don't think he makes careless mistakes either, but instead, mistakes that anyone could have made. I'm just saying he's human to some degree and he can't know everything, and I still stand by that, but I did present the wrong argument last chapter. Because, (I sort of forgot this last chappy), he was in on the plan. He knew Voldie would attack and had to let it happen in order to kill him once and for all. I'll have to give that fic a look-see when I have a chance. No problem. Lol, I like your idea of Voldie's death. Okay, I'll wash my hands a lot!

Bulldogchik05: I'm glad you liked everyone's reactions. Lol, yeah, I like to think that in a crisis like this one, the barriers between houses would fall. (er... yeah, it was all you! Hehehe) Yes, poor Ron in denial. And Snape having a little flip out session, which was probably long overdue. You're right! I didn't even put that together before, but the two reactions are very similar! Of course, that's what I would probably do too! Once, when I was about 10, my brother got really upset about some random thing and through this little music box of mine that I completely adored and had had since forever against the wall and it smashed into a million pieces. He wasn't mad at me, he just needed to throw something. But then, I got upset and started chucking pillows and slippers at him with all my might. I didn't really want to hurt him, I just needed to throw something. (I forgave him

though because he felt so bad about it.) Okay, that was supposed to have a point. Oh yes, throwing things. Right. Anyways, I actually wrote that before OotP, but tweaked it afterward, so I may have subconsciously used that. I didn't write that scene. You're not supposed to know what Dumbledore told Snape. You'll find out eventually though. Significance though? Definitely.

Mell5: Ah, I see. True. Oh yes, my detailed theories can scare people with the tiny little tidbits I take from the text to examine. They're probably all wrong, but that's not the point! Lol. Yeah, and Dumbledore was in on the plan! Lol, I completely forgot that argument last chapter. He actually wanted Voldemort to come so Harry could get rid of him, well, maybe not "want" but he knew it was the only way to get rid of him. Anyways, I'm glad you liked the reactions and stuff from last chapter.

Myr Halcyon: Lol, thank you! True, but I love the abused-Harry storyline when it's done well. Call me sadistic. I'm glad you like my story though. Erg...coughs and hides. I will assure you that I won't make a specific ending solely to please reviewers. Cheers. I really hope you do end up sending me illustrations! I love pictures!!

Ratgirl: lol, I sort of cried while writing Sirius's part, because I have to really get myself into a scene before writing it if I want to make it realistic, but the part in this story I really cried while writing was the scene with Ron telling Harry he was supposed to always be there in the Hospital Wing. I was practically bawling when I wrote that! Lol. That's why I like it when people telling me they cried at those scenes that I got emotional writing; I like to know I got what I was trying to across. But we'll see what happens with this one.

Samara-chan: Erm...hi to you to! Lol. It's okay for you to scare people, hey, it's your name after all. I'm glad you liked the Snape bit! Yay!! Warm fuzzy feelings with you being shocked, though I sort of suspect that may be a lie, since there weren't any real shocking bits in the chapter. Lol, I always do the slow sitting up, acting all brave, like you aren't very concerned, and then diving for the lamp and whipping around, ready to kick some ass, or run for your life. I call myself an idiot far more times than is probably healthy. Lol, yeah that sucks when you might have to kill people you love. A real bummer.

Terence: Lol, you really cried? Yay! Lol, poor cat. Me? Something up my sleeve? Never! Or maybe...or maybe not...you never know. Okay, definitely should not have eaten so many gummi lifesavers. The whole enchilada? *blushes deeply* oh well shucks. Yes, lets start a save the beakers campaign!! My lab partner broke one the first day of chemistry and our teacher is very Snape-like, no kidding!! And she almost cried! He yelled at our class the other week, and said, "You're all completely incompetent! This is common sense. Is there even one person in this classroom with the slightest sliver of brain matter in their skulls?" Everyone was near tears except for me. I was practically jumping with excitement because he was acting so much like Snape. I think I'm the only person in the entire school that thinks he's cool. I think he's just lonely. Very sarcastic. I think it's funny.

Dadaiiro: Hmm..what's Snape up to? I'll go ask him and tell you next chapter. I know! I still am shocked every time I look at the number of reviews I have. I always go to my profile and look at the number every time I need a mood-booster. Yup, the reporters have come, those freaky people. Yeah, Lupin's with Sirius. Why am I telling you this when you just read it? I don't know. I'll expand on the Malfoy situation next chapter!

Wiccan PussyKat: lol, well, I'm glad I could bring a tear to your eye, when you never cry! I'm so glad you liked all the reactions!! Yeah, I think Harry would have liked to know he broke the rift between the houses. I know, poor Padfoot. Lol, yeah, that bit with McGonagall was a bit random, but hey, I wanted to put it in there for some odd reason. It's possible! I thought Harry was adorable when she told him about the ball. "I don't dance" and all that stuff. Lol. Poor thing. Yeah, Ron and Snape did react the same in a lot of ways. They both cared about Harry a lot, in their own ways. Dumbledore knew about the plan too. Everyone else was just too shocked with Harry's death to really care about the details of why. At least at that point. Lol, no, there's still at least one more chapter. And then, I'll be moving on to my next story.

ParanoiaIn2005: To say it was corny is a great understatement. Of course I do own a copy of the movie and have watched it a thousand times, but I generally stop it after Hermione runs in and hugs Harry

and then has an awkward moment with Ron (cutest thing ever!! Though it did kill the suspense about who Hermione would end up with. I always knew it would be Ron, but my friend insisted she would be with Harry. We had a bet going, and the movie kind of killed it.) lol. Poor Sirius. After everything, Harry abandons him to go live with a reviewer. Ooh yay!! Cookies. Very delicious. I loved them. I'm so happy you liked the last chapter!!

Angel74: Wow! I can't believe this story evoked so much emotion from you! I really feel happy now!! Wow, thank you so much!! I'm so glad you got into the characters so much!! You've completely made my day!! I can't say thank you enough for your wonderful compliments. You really brought a smile to my face!

SiriouslyObsessed: Thank you!! Your family says that to you? Harsh. But I'm glad I could melt the "heart of stone". Thank you!! A big grin is blooming on my face. Oh my gosh, My Girl is the saddest movie ever!! The scene you described had me bawling!! Oh man, I'm going to start crying just thinking of that. It does sort of fit though. But yes, it's generally good to keep your eyes open. It's a bit difficult to read otherwise. Hehehe.

Also thanks to: Musicstarlover, Aconite (Wow, that's a lot of crying! Score one for Celebony!), Rise of Chaos (Thank you! I hope you continue to like my stuff!), Nelum (Nope, not finished yet!), Rysel Ash (erg, hopefully this chapter wasn't sad for you. Maybe I should lock my window?), Maethoriell Uini Tawar, Mickeymoose, fantagal (lol, *takes deep bow*, well I'm glad I could go where practically no fanfiction writer has gone before), Sphinx (Yup), theauthorthatwrites (Okay, definitely scared. Okay, not really. I mean it's not like any of you know where I live right? *Looks out window to see a mob of angry reviewers* uh oh.), Kevin C, Avvy Kavvy (Well, Draco was alive and had no one to comfort him but strangers, while Harry was dead and people probably knew not to get in the way of his friends), StormyBelle (Thanks! I'm glad you liked my portrayal of Snape! It was one of my greatest challenges!), ER, horsefan (wow, did I really start this in June? I can't believe this has been going on so long! Thanks!), *EriEka127, Howling Wolf 22 (I'm glad you liked the funny parts as well as the sad! I don't usually get comments about the funny parts, but I'm glad you picked them up!!), Siri Kat, Miss Shadow

Prowl, Pilot Candidate (Wow! I'm the first?? Yay! I'm glad you like it!!), Pennypacker, liz (don't worry, there's more!), Grumpygrim, Sarah, Buff E Rox, magnum-man-05 (woah, those are some extreme compliments!! Thanks, but my writing skills rivaling J.K.s? I think that's a bit too far, lol. But thank you for saying so anyways!!), Darcy101, veggy_gelfling (LOL, I can't believe you cried so much!! I didn't think that chapter was that sad, but I'm obviously glad you did!!), Zork the Unbearable (Thank you Zork! I'm glad I could make Zork get a bit misty eyed, but hope that I didn't cause Zork's headache. Lol), Arctic wolf2, leo, sweet775 (lol, wow, thank you! I can't believe you were that into it! That's a really great compliment. Hahaha, better than JK Rowling? Lol, well that's a bit extreme, but thank you so much!!), blackunicorn, tati1 (lol, one of the best things you've ever read? Wow, thanks!!), BratPrincess-187 (I'm so glad you liked last chapter! Lol, I've bought the locks, just in case.), HG/HrRFan4ever (I'm so happy you think this fic's original! No Dumbledore knew. I'm not sure if I put that in with the original Harry/Snape conversation about it, but it was in a later practice dueling scene, I'm almost positive. I'll have to go back and check myself.), shadowarwen, mythology, me, Nemti (I'm so happy you liked this fic and cried when you read it!!), LilyJamesAAF (Yay! I got you to cry *does happy dance*), Jay-Jay (cool!! Woo hoo!!), SiriusWolf (I want to see that movie! I get what your saying. I sometimes consider the same thing, so I'm trying to only use plotlines that could only really work with the HP characters.), Holly, BabyBlu4, slytherisa, HermioneP. (Thanks! I'm so happy you think it's original. Good luck with your publishing.), Romm, Cestrel (yay! Does the happy because I made someone cry dance!), PhoenixPadfoot89, Crystal113, ChildOfDarkness, Maxenne, powerblazer, LuvaboyDan*Hesmyman (I was laughing so hard at your username. It's brill! Thank you so much!!), Lindiel Eryn, LadyLilyPotter (yay!! I'm glad I could change your dry-eyes way. Lol, and yes, I am in fact aware of my evil streak, which I happen to love. It helps me make fun stories.), Kar'Nia, Arsenal, jbcna, tessa, Maximum Poofy-Confused Queen (really? I guess you must have liked Snape then! I always cry when other people do. I really hope I gave you some inspiration), "crystal,lily,james and sirius", moonlight4, Shawn Pickett, Stلالuna melonballer, kathfire (Thanks!), Kate Potter, ckat44, BlackDiva, GrimmyD, Xenocide (yes, offstage scene. Don't worry, you were meant to be confused), jedidiah (really? The first one? Wow, I feel honored!), Anora (lol, if I had a cat, I'd be very

scared. I do have a dog, but he's too cute to kill. Plus he's the size of a couch with big teeth. He's really a sweetie though!), ReflectionsOfReality, feenamoon16, AngelMorph (I'm glad you liked the reactions, but no, Dumbledore's too mysterious a character for me to even attempt to relate what he's feeling. No, that isn't what Snape meant, but I doubt anyone really knows what he meant, so don't feel alone in that!), Wynjara, Pameruh qui aime malfoy (lol, yes, I love Draco as well! See I made him good *excitedly points to fic*. He'll be in the next chapter. Yeah, I'm not too great at French. That's why I dropped the class. I hope you're feeling better!), Syvixxe (Yay, I'm glad I could be the first to make you cry. Wow I sound like a bully.), and Lourdes

Author's Note: Hey everyone! Happy New Year!! Alright, so I know I said one chapter left (a.k.a. this one) but as often happens, I went a bit overboard in trying to fit everything in so there are now two chapters, this one and one more left! Once again, this story isn't over yet!! It's a bit on the short side, but next chapter will make up for it and then some. Oh boy, today, I was talking and mentioned the kids I babysit named the Hendersons, and I called them the Stensons without even realizing it! My sister burst out laughing and everyone else was clueless. It was quite funny, but I'm doing it more and more often! I almost called one of my friends "Ron" the other week. His name's Brandon!! Ahhh! I think I'm losing it! Well, hope you all enjoy!

The following days passed quietly. The rest of the tests had been canceled. Usually, everyone would have skirted around Harry's two best friends in the halls, but many were still plagued with guilt over Voldemort's words to Harry. Dumbledore had called a school assembly and explained what had happened, from the Recnac Transfaerso spell to the downfall of their greatest enemy and their fallen hero.

To make up for their past behavior toward Harry, students from all different houses and years approached Ron and Hermione, expressing their apologies for what had happened and for their actions in the past. Many had their own Harry stories, from helping one second year hide from Filch after tracking mud inside, to comforting a third year after she had been yelled at by Snape, to defending a few of the younger students against some bullies. Neither Ron nor Hermione knew about half the stories and were filled with both pride and sorrow at each one. They agreed that to Harry, these events were probably nothing special. He would never know how much he had touched people's lives.

"Well, I think Harry got what he wanted," Ron told Hermione.

"What's that?"

“He’s being remembered as Harry rather than just the Boy-Who-Lived.”

The two had avoided meals in the Great Hall, not wanting to deal with the pitying glances. The condolences and wary glances from the other students were just too much to handle. Ron had begun to slip in and out of long dazes, staring into space or the fire, not responding to anything around him. He had basically stopped talking to anyone except for Hermione, who often also preferred the silence.

Ginny had hardly come out of her room, and when she had, she was always to be seen clutching either the picture of she and Harry sleeping, or the one of the pair dancing. In one of her few trips out of the Gryffindor tower with Hermione, she had overheard Cho Chang insisting to a group of people that she and Harry had been secretly dating and insinuated that they had slept together.

Nobody really believed her at this point, but it had incensed Ginny so much that the smaller redhead had lunged at Cho and tackled her to the ground. She punched Cho square in the face, screaming for her to never insult the memory of Harry like that again. Hermione, for once, did not make any attempt to stop a fight. The memory of what Cho did to Harry was too fresh in her mind. For the girl to dare try and take away Harry’s innocence by spreading her horrid and false rumors was enough to get the girl on her permanent bad list, a place no sane person wanted to be.

Professor McGonagall had somehow pulled Ginny off of Cho, the young Weasley kicking and yelling profanities and threats to Cho the whole time she was being dragged away, while the older girl held her bleeding nose sobbing.

After Ginny explained to her Head of House what had happened, Professor McGonagall smiled and told Ginny she was proud of her loyalty to her friend.

Nobody had seen Fred and George so solemn. There were no pranks, no matching evil grins, no laughing. If they had been passing out food, people would most likely have actually felt safe accepting it. No pranks, with only one exception.

They had been walking down to the kitchens when they had heard Crabbe and Goyle talking about Malfoy's "betrayal," saying that he should have "just cursed the li'l bastard."

That night at dinner, after eating some cupcakes that had appeared on their plates, with the help of Dobby the house elf, their tongues had mysteriously fallen out onto the table. The Slytherins had screamed and scrambled away, as Crabbe and Goyle screamed in horror as best they could without tongues. Fred and George had walked right up to them and warned them never to insult a member of their family again, which, as they made clear, included Harry. Crabbe and Goyle grabbed their tongues and bolted to the Hospital Wing.

The twins were sentenced to detention with Professor McGonagall who gave them sweets and talking to them about their shop. She even ordered a few of the newly developed product, murmuring something about showing stupid Divination professors who talked too much.

Eloise and Neville had taken to the now deserted library to be away from everyone. The place reminded them of their study sessions with Harry. They had taken turns comforting the other as they cried, or had cried together.

They were sitting against a wall in silence when Neville took a deep breath.

"You-Know-Who's followers used the Cruciatus Curse on my parents. They were Aurors and Death Eaters got them. They went insane from the torture," he said quietly, looking at the ground before him. Eloise's eyes went wide and she looked at Neville in horror. "When he used the curse on Harry, I just couldn't...I thought he...the screaming, he looked like he was in so much pain..." he stumbled over the words before breaking down in tears, burying his face in his hands.

"Oh Neville, come here," Eloise said quietly, pulling Neville into a hug, letting him cry into her shoulder.

"I never told anyone before. Maybe I should have told Harry though. He would have understood, you know? He lost his parents to You-Know-Who too," he said with a sniff.

"You-Know-Who ruined so many people's lives," Eloise murmured. "Neville, do you want to talk about your parents?" she asked quietly.

"It's no big deal," he muttered, looking embarrassed.

"Of course it's a big deal! Don't be embarrassed. Shit happens, you know? But it's not good to keep it all inside," she said with a sympathetic smile. Neville nodded.

"Okay," he said quietly. The two leaned back against the wall and Neville laid his head on Eloise's shoulder. And Neville began talking about his parents and living with his gran for the first time.

News had reached the wizarding world by now and people were torn between being happy that the Dark Lord was dead for good, and mourning the loss of their savior, the boy who had sacrificed himself for them all. As many celebrations that were taking place, an equal number of people cried for a boy they never even knew.

People began showing up at Hogwarts, leaving flowers and candles on the Quidditch Pitch. Waves of them showed up, many crying, and soon the Quidditch field was completely covered in flowers, candles, notes, and other tokens of affection for the Boy-Who-Lived-No-Longer.

Hermione was returning from the kitchens, intent on getting Ron to eat something, when she ran into Professor Lupin. The man looked exhausted and depressed. He gave Hermione a sad smile and asked how she was holding up.

"Not so great, to tell you the truth. I'm trying to get Ron to eat more and talk, but he just keeps staring into the fire or sitting on Harry's bed or staring at the door, like he keeps expecting Harry to come through it. I sometimes think he will too," she said, choking back a sob and quickly wiping away some tears. "How's Sirius doing?"

Remus shook his head and sighed. "He hasn't eaten since it happened except for small bits of toast. It's been five days and he's getting so thin. I'm going to get some more food and try to force him to eat. I can't budge him from..." He stopped himself before he said "Harry's body," not wanting to upset the already distraught girl.

"And how are you doing, Professor?" she asked.

"As well as I can right now," he said with another sad smile. "The pain will lessen eventually. Never thought it would after Harry's parents died and Sirius was sent away and Peter's supposed death. I lost all my friends at once. I just hope I don't lose Sirius again now."

Hermione nodded. "Harry would have hated it if that ever happened," she said painfully, wondering if she would ever get used to talking about Harry in past tense.

Two nights before the Leaving Feast, Fred came to find Ron and Hermione sitting in silence in the otherwise empty common room.

"You guys might want to take a look at this," he said, motioning for them to follow.

He led them out of Hogwarts toward the Great Lake and the Quidditch pitch. As soon as they exited the doors, they saw a huge crowd of students at the lake.

"What's going on?" Hermione asked.

"The Quidditch team set it up. We spread the word that anybody who wanted to could bring a floating candle down to the lake tonight in memory of Harry. We had no idea this many people would come!" Fred explained. "It looks like a lot of the Slytherins even came!"

The crowd saw them approaching and parted a way to let them through. A tearful Angelina handed them each a candle and lit it. When they reached the lake, Hermione burst out into tears. It was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen. Hundreds of lights glittered as they floated peacefully along the lake.

Dumbledore passed them, the first in a line of teachers. He placed his own candle in the water with a comforting nod at the two. His candle was the same size and brightness as everyone else's, which in and of itself, was somehow striking. It was as if everyone was meeting at some equal level in remembrance of Harry. The headmaster gave them a meaningful nod of the head before heading back up to the castle.

Next came a solemn Professor McGonagall and a sniffing Hagrid, who was doing everything he could to suppress his mournful wails.

Finally, everyone else had put their candles in the water. There were no announcements or speeches, just everyone watching the little glittering lights and remembering their brave and caring classmate.

"Er...Ron? Hermione?"

The two looked up to see the face they least expected to find in the world. Draco Malfoy stood before them biting his bottom lip. He had just walked up from the castle. His hands were in his pockets and he looked a bit nervous, but also strangely dazed. His eyes didn't quite focus on anything and for the first time, the two saw how much grief Malfoy was in himself. They had heard that his whole family had disowned him. He was apparently going to be staying with his godfather now. All of his friends had turned their back on him after what he had done, or refused to do, during the attack.

The young Slytherin took a deep breath and began to talk, looking interestedly at the ground.

"I, um...I wanted to say that I'm really sorry about Po—um, Harry. I know that we were always fighting and stuff, but I honestly wish that he was still here," he said quietly.

Ron and Hermione nodded, knowing that must have taken a lot to say that.

"Thank you Draco," Hermione said kindly.

The blonde looked over their shoulders at the glittering lights on the lake. "It's such a waste. He seemed like he would have understood," he whispered, more to himself than anyone else.

He seemed to snap out of his dazed state and pulled something out of his pocket. It was a candle. He lit it with his wand and set the candle in the water. With a slight push, he sent it floating along. He gave them a last nod before turning and running back to the castle. They could barely see Professor Snape standing in the doorway, putting an arm over Malfoy's shoulder as he ran up and leading him inside.

Ron and Hermione exchanged a sad glance before turning their backs on the castle. They were the last to step up to the edge of the lake. They both crouched down and set their candles in the water.

"Goodbye Harry," Ron whispered.

"Goodbye Harry," Hermione whispered.

They stood up. Ron put his arm around Hermione's shoulders as she rested her head on his. They joined the school in watching the little lights dance across the water's surface, just remembering Harry Potter.

"How's Draco doing?" Dumbledore asked as Snape stepped into his office.

"Not so well. I was surprised when he said he needed to go to the vigil. It was the first time he's said more than two words to me since it happened, or to anyone for that matter. I don't know what to say to him. What could I possibly say?" he asked with a sigh. "Albus I don't think I'm the right person for taking Draco right now. He needs someone who knows how to comfort people, not me."

"Trust me, Severus, you are the best person to take care of him. You're his godfather after all. It'll do you both good."

Snape was not in the mood to argue that a heartless professor could not possibly be good for a grieving boy, so changed the subject to a slightly more pressing matter.

“Has Lupin got Black to leave Har—er, Potter yet?” he asked. Dumbledore smiled at the slip.

“Yes. He slipped a sleeping potion into his drink and brought him to his chambers for the night. Sirius could do with some rest.”

“Did you tell Lupin then?” Snape asked cautiously. He hoped the headmaster hadn’t gotten the werewolf’s hopes up.

“No, I just told him that Sirius needed his rest and would have to leave Harry’s side sometime. Remus is grieving as well. I doubt he even considered an ulterior motive.”

“And you got the crystal?”

“Of course. Everything is ready,” Dumbledore said calmly. “Poppy is a bit nervous, but she’s ready. Just let me go get Harry’s body, and we’ll get to the Hospital Wing.”

The headmaster stepped into his bedroom, a place he had visited rarely in the past few days. He looked sadly at the body of the young boy, looking the same as it had that fateful night.

He gently brushed Harry’s hair away from his forehead and gazed sadly at his curse scar that had sentenced him to a life of hardship and an early death. He only hoped the young Gryffindor would get a second chance.

“I’m so sorry, Harry. I wish your burdens could have rested upon my own shoulders. If only it was my job to choose your destiny,” he said quietly. “But we’re going to try to give you a different fate than this one.”

He lifted the limp body into his arms and carried him back into his office where Snape was waiting next to Dumbledore’s special door. The headmaster called “Hospital Wing” and Snape opened the door.

The two stepped into Madam Pomfrey's office. When the door closed behind them, it disappeared into the wall.

"Albus. Severus. I've got the back room ready," Madam Pomfrey said nervously, eyeing Harry's body sadly. She led them through a hidden door in her office to a small room with a single bed in it. It was normally used for patients that needed to be kept out of view for some reason, whether it be to conceal their identity or their ailment. It was seldom used, but would serve its purpose now.

Dumbledore laid Harry down on the small hospital bed.

"I'm still unsure what you are hoping to do with that potion, Severus," she said as she set out all the necessary potions Snape had asked for.

"It's a bit complicated, but I'll try to explain. You see, a person dies when their life energy is destroyed, but a life energy can only be destroyed in its original body. For Harry's life energy to be destroyed, it would have to have gone back into Harry's body. Also, that's the only way his soul could be released. When the Dark Lord died, Harry's life energy and all that's attached to it should have gone back to Harry's body and been destroyed, since a life energy cannot survive in a dead body. But Albus here, with one of his all-knowing type moves, caught the life energy before it went back into Harry's body."

Dumbledore's eyes twinkled at that.

"So Harry's life energy is still alive, but will be destroyed as soon as it goes back into Harry. And his soul is trapped in his dead body, but will be released as soon as his life energy's destroyed. I don't see how that's helpful," said Madam Pomfrey confusedly.

"Well, there's a potion/spell combination that will allow us to channel a little bit of our own life energy into Harry. Not giving the life energy to him, but sharing it while the life energy returns, so that when it does, it won't find a dead body, but a live one and will be able to live, causing Harry to live again," Snape explained.

"Then why haven't we done this already? What's the catch?" she asked, knowing it couldn't be that simple.

"Well, the spell Harry did made the cancer grow so large that it's practically taken over. Not only would it kill him in the same way it did with the Dark Lord, but would also more than likely attach to the life energy being used to support him, killing us as well. And that's assuming that the spell works, since it's been so rarely used before."

"So what makes you think it'll work now?"

"Well, I've been working on a potion to get rid of Harry's cancer for awhile. I could remove it from the life energy, but only by damaging the life energy. But I think I've finally managed to find something that will separate the cancer out, without damaging anything. Of course it's only in theory, since there wasn't a way to test it."

"So really it's quite possible that we could not only kill Harry, but ourselves in doing this if this thing doesn't work. Good," she said, now extremely nervous.

"Well, not quite. I'm going to be the only one of us channeling energy, so you're not at risk, Poppy," Snape said cautiously, watching the headmaster's reaction. He hadn't quite mentioned this part yet. Dumbledore's surprised eyes met his.

"Severus, I won't allow you to do that. I will be the one doing the channeling," he said in an authoritative tone.

"No, Albus. I need you to perform the spell. You're far more powerful than either of us, so it needs to be you if this has a shot of working. And Poppy, we're going to need your medical expertise to watch over this. It has to be me," he insisted.

"But Draco, Severus," Dumbledore protested. Snape put up a hand to stop him.

"I can't help Draco on my own, Albus. The truth is I hardly know him and I can't understand what he's going through. As ironic as it may be, the only person I think might have a chance to get through to him,

is Harry. He understands what it's like to be rejected from your family. He knows what it feels like when people turn their back on you," Snape insisted.

"If you can get the two to talk without hexing each other," Madam Pomfrey interjected.

"Both boys have changed, Poppy. Subtly enough not for many not to notice, but drastically enough to perhaps change things," Dumbledore said with his familiar twinkle in his eye. "Through tragedy, they've each discovered themselves a bit, and they aren't as different as they believe."

There was a bit of a pause before Madam Pomfrey clapped her hands once. "All right, then, let's do this. Severus, what do you need us to do?"

Tension filled the room as Snape began giving instructions.

"All right, I'm going to take this blue potion and start the spell that will let us share the life energy. After I start, I'll be basically useless to you until it's done. Before that we're going to inject this green potion into Harry and myself, so that when it returns to the body, if it all works, the cancer will not be able to attach itself to either of us. I'm not sure if Harry's magic will be strong enough to expel the cancer right now, so Albus, that's what that spell I gave you is for. You're going to need to direct it into that crystal and trap it there so we can later destroy it. Everybody clear?" he asked. The other two nodded.

Madam Pomfrey came over and hugged Snape tearfully. Snape stiffened under the unfamiliar embrace.

"Oh Severus, if you get yourself killed, I'll bring you back to life and kill you myself, do you hear?" she said tearfully before backing away.

Dumbledore also pulled the potions master into an embrace. "I love you, my boy. Remember that. Wipe that horrified expression off your face, Severus, I'm being serious," he said with a chuckle before pulling away.

“Oh Merlin, if I knew you all were going to get all sappy on me, I would have never volunteered for this,” he muttered, evoking laughter from the medi-witch and the headmaster.

He swallowed the two potions as Madam Pomfrey injected the green one into Harry’s arm, casting a quick spell to spread it throughout his bloodstream despite the unmoving blood in his veins.

“Well, this is it. I...er...I guess I’m sort of fond of you two myself,” he said very quickly, immediately saying the spell, “Erah Sefil,” before he could see the grins on the others’ faces. He laid his hands flat on Harry’s chest. A white glow surrounded the two, concentrating under Snape’s palms. Snape’s head hung limply as Harry’s chest began to rise and fall almost unnoticeably. Aside from that, there were no other signs of life from the boy.

Dumbledore took out small, clear ball that floated just above his hand. Inside, light swirled around, now predominantly red, surrounding the white and gold.

“I hope this works,” Dumbledore said quietly as he made the ball disappear without a word, letting the light zoom into Harry’s body. A gasp escaped Harry’s mouth and his face contorted in pain, still unconscious. Even Snape gave a small moan of pain.

“Acciana Recnac!” Dumbledore bellowed, pointing his wand from Harry’s body to the crystal in his other hand.

A beam of red shot from Harry’s chest to the crystal, filling the crystal with blood-red light until the line from Harry’s body to Dumbledore’s hand disappeared.

Snape immediately collapsed to the ground as the white light surrounding the two vanished.

“Oh no, Albus,” Madam Pomfrey exclaimed. The two raced toward Harry and Snape.

A/N:Er...okay, my computer's flipping out. Anyways, remember that there's still a chapter left!! Does everyone understand what the potion/spell's supposed to do? If you're still confused and want to understand, pop me an email!! Also, since I've procrastinated reading Pride and Prejudice this holiday in order to work on this fic, I'm now a bit screwed and can't put it off any longer. Therefore, not much time to update this. This, unfortunately, means that the review responses will be a bit short and lame. I'm really sorry, but it had to be this way or I wouldn't have time to update at all!! But I really love you all!! Please review!! They're what I live off of.

* * * * *

Serebabe: Lol, I wish! I'm so glad you like it though!! Lol, of course Malfoy's a real sweetie, so is Snape. They just don't know it yet. I'll fix that. Hehehe. Yes, I'm sort of scared of the rabid reviewers out there, but my guard dog will protect me. *Looks down to find dog sleeping again* Then again, maybe not. Lol. Oooh, good job on the color of the potion!! I'll give you a hint, it's connected with one of those!! The question is which one. No more Dursley stuff right now, but I'll take care of them eventually.

Anna: Thanks! You're right, Ron is immature, but I figure something like this would force him to act a bit more mature, you know? He thinks they're all invincible, but now he knows they're not. He's also put in the position of having to be a bit responsible in helping Harry. Lol, hmm...a phonebook with a plot! That would be quite intriguing. I didn't know that! Well, you could think of her as a bit of a mother hen, looking over Harry, but I guess she doesn't really fit that description. Oh well!

Avvy Kavvy: Lol, I've wondered that before too! Oh man, I would give anything to do that. When I was young I would sit in my room for hours staring at my cabinet door, willing it to open. I was convinced you could do magic if you put enough will power into it. Never worked.... When I go to London (this summer, yay!!) I'm going to run at Platform Nine and $\frac{3}{4}$, and then act all bewildered as to why I can't get through. Lol. I gave you your 2 chapters!!

Mell5: lol, yeah, I always thought it would be brilliant for McGonagall just to take out Trelawney!! I meant to write that she hadn't expected that. I was doing a lot of cutting and tweaking to that scene and I must have messed that bit up. Lol, I'm glad you liked the Dursley scene. I could picture them turning on each other to save their own asses. They're selfish like that! Well, the potion color could mean Harry's eyes, or the Avada Kedavra spell, as Serebabe brought up. It is foreshadowing though. You'll just have to guess which one!

Myr Halcyon: I'm glad you like the Stensons! I never planned them to be such a major part of the story, but you reviewers convinced me! I like Mr. Stenson as well. Of course I invented him, so I guess I'm supposed to like him. Lol. I'm glad you find him intriguing. I'll see what I can do. I'm not sure what you're referring to about "Voldemort dangerous beyond Harry's reckoning." Are you referring to when Mr. Weasley was talking about him to the Stensons? Because there, I only meant that Harry was naïve to the danger Voldemort caused the first time around. Harry would never know how grateful people are toward him for defeating old Voldie. He didn't even know all the evil Voldemort had committed, yet he fought him anyways, since that was what he felt he had to do. I hope the end of this chapter leaves you with more pondering! I can't wait to get your illustration!!

Liz: I definitely see your point. I did make Harry a little too perfect sometime, but I argue that it's because having a deadly illness sort of gave him a different perspective on life: what's important and what's not worth getting uptight about, you know? He doesn't have a lot of time left so why bother with petty fights when he could be making a difference by helping people? Plus he's got a crap self-esteem and has lied to a lot of people. Of course know that he's dead, nobody but a few bastards (Crabbe and Goyle, Cho) are going to bring up the bad bits about him. But I'll make sure to watch out that I don't make him too perfect.

Chibi-Bex: Never fear, I got the review, and I know what you mean about freakish dust bunnies, you should see my grandma's basement. LOL. Oooh, you got it soooo close!! I'm very impressed. Alright, idea #8: We stick chewing gum all over the hallway and with it spell out "Fred and George Weasley were here," just to give old Filchy a hint. So then Filch, who has finally got the permission for whipping back

because of evil Umbridge, gets our dear sex-god twins and is about to torture them, when we attack Mrs. Norris with silly string! When Filch runs after us, we put on Harry's invisibility cloak (which we pinched along with a pair of his snitch-patterned boxers for a souvenir), and run into the room where we release the twins. They help us tie up Filch. They are so infatuated with our creative way of rescuing them, they fall in love and voila! We fly off into the sunset on broomsticks. Awwww...

Lady Abbey Bartlet: yeah, McGonagall's a bit...stressed. LOL. Mr. Weasley has such a perfect family, it's hard to believe that someone else's family life was so horrible, especially someone so close to him. He just wanted to believe that Harry was just going through a rough patch with his relatives, but that they all really loved each other. The whole 'how could you not love the kid you raised' deal. Plus, Harry would have never told them about the worse aspects of his home life. Lol, I'll do my best with the Dursleys, though I do still need them so can't have a meteor crash into their house yet. Don't worry, I have a bunch of stuffed animals. My favorite's this totally beat up and ratty looking dog with a strip of bandanna around its neck named Cowboy. I've had that thing for forever. Lol, I do the longer responses when I have a lot to say in response to someone's review! You just always give me something to write back about! Lol, woah, you spend 30 minutes writing my review? Thanks!! I have homework over break! Not fair! Lol, what an awesome line! LotR rocks!

bulldogchik05: lol, I ADORE the play-by-play! That's the most wonderful thing! Lol, I'm glad you found the Voldie's body thing amusing. Lol, wow you seemed to do a lot of crying last chapter! I'm so glad I could bring you to tears. Hahaha. Well, I'm thinking that Colin and Dennis may have made copies, though your way makes them sound a lot more selfless and philanthropic. The Dursleys are extreme ass-wipes.

They'll get theirs someday.

Wiccan PussyKat: Lol, I'll haggle for two. I know! Seriously. Lol, I actually had no idea about the password meaning that. Actually, it does have a meaning though! It has to do with Egyptian gods. I can't really tell you which ones right now, or it might give something away,

but I'll definitely tell you next chapter. Just remind me to tell you what I was going for with the password and I'll tell you. Yes, I did think this story out and have tried to make most things mean something rather than just dropping them off a cliff after being done with the scene. Lol, don't worry, I'll write another fic, I promise. I've already started on it as a matter of fact.

Paranoialn2005: mmm...good cookies. Good connection, it is foreshadowing, whether it's Harry's eyes or the A.K. curse color, as serebabe brought up, that's my only clue. You have to figure out which. You're not reading too much into things, you're onto things!

Also thanks to ChicagoMyth, WhiteTiger9984, EriEka127, Shawn Pickett, grumpygrim (those hormones getcha every time), GrimmyD, Romm, Charmed1s, Erin (no cupcake then I suppose?), Maethoriell Uini Tawar, Bosson12787, L.I.T. Wanderer, TweedleDuh, SiriusWolf (that's cool about the novel! LotR was sooo awesome), water drifter (thanks for the wonderful compliment! How old's your brother? That's so great that you're reading this to him!!), crazedbrat28, sgtharrison46, rebelutionary, lilynjamesAAF (lol, know what you mean about Harry! Love him!), Death[4Life], Samara-chan (to have Harry live or not to live, that is the question. We should make the Dursleys watch the video in the Ring. Get Samara on the case. *evil grin*), tati1, Dadaiiro, Holly, ratgirl, ChildOfDarkness, Zork the Unbearable, LadyLilyPotter, panthercub (thank you! You'll just have to see!), gizachick (wow. That's a lot of tears!), Moonlight4, dea puella, Songstress131, feenamoon16, Kelsey, W'rkncacnter (lol, that's because I originally wrote a scene like that, but for certain reasons, I really needed to take it out. It wasn't the right time.), Maximum Poofy-Confused Queen, Howling Wolf 22, Crystal113, Naia (I'm sorry about your grandfather. It's the same with me. I'm so glad you like this fic!), Lindiel Eryn (lol, not quite that long. Snape gave them the ears and tails when he found Harry stabbed. He briefly talks about it in the scene right after that one.), tessa (wow, I'm glad my fic could be the one to make you cry out of all the ones out there!), ER, fantagal, Thundering Lights (lol, oh damn, I'm not allowed to kill you now? *puts away knives and chainsaw* damn. Lol, don't worry! Hmmm...well, the question is, will it make Harry live, or have killed them both? or something else? Muahaha), horsefan, Overdrive, firemask, Blue Phoenix2, ChingChuan (I'm so sorry about your friend.

Mine had cancer as well, though a different kind than I gave Harry. I'm glad you like the story!), StormyBelle, mickeymoose, BlackDiva, Death-TheOnlyTrueFreedom, Helen, xx Schizoid, Celebel, "crystal,lily,james and sirius", Darak, Lady Sapphira Serpens (thank you so much! I hope one day I can publish a book! That would be wonderful), ckat44 (hahaha!! Yes, he's now Harriet! Well, you never know! Oh you should definitely talk with me again! I'll have to give those fics a look when I have the chance!), musicstarlover, shadowarwen, Titanic-HarryPotter-lvr-2, PhoenixPadfoot89, Silver Phoenix Shadow87 (lol, James would roast me alive), ReflectionsOfReality (lol, I'll make sure to do that when I'm a famous author! I'm off to go dream about winning the Pulitzer now), Steff, Kate Potter, Rhinemjr, Cestrel (I hope you didn't think this was unrealistic. It's not a miraculous potion to raise the dead. He's been working on the potion for awhile and the other one already existed. Not so random, right? Lol), Velith (I think a lot of people had that problem with reviewing the last chapter. Don't worry, it's not just you), AngelMorph (Thanks for the info!), Rhysel Ash, Lourdes, SiriuslyObsessed , Wynjara (lol, thanks! That's what happened to me in the fifth book!), Eskapay (lol, your email made me laugh), Doneril, and Senri (our Snape debate was awesome. He's good I tell you!!)

Author's Note: Here it is, part one of the final chapter. It's hard to believe I started posting this fic in June, and started writing it about a year ago. *wipes away tear* My baby's all grown up and posted. Well, here it is, I hope you all enjoy, and please read my final author's note after the ending because it's semi-very important. Lol.

As Dumbledore kneeled by Snape, the potions master gave a small moan and wearily opened his eyes. Dumbledore let out a breath he didn't know he had been holding.

"Did it work?" Snape murmured tiredly.

"Here Albus," Madam Pomfrey said, handing him a vial of something to help restore some of Snape's energy. "Harry's alive, but barely. He's not waking."

"He's not?" Snape asked worriedly, clumsily climbing to his feet, still filled with exhaustion. Sure enough, Harry was breathing and had a pulse, but he still looked like death. "Oh no, what if his soul escaped somehow?" he said, panic clear in his voice.

"That's impossible since Harry's life energy was not destroyed. All we can do now is wait and see what happens. In the meantime, you need to get some rest. You look like you're going to collapse. Draco can sleep in my chambers tonight. If I can borrow some Dreamless Sleeping Potion from you for him, Poppy?"

With a wave of a hand, he conjured up another bed. He helped Snape over to it, despite the potions master's protests. Yet, the spell had definitely taken a lot out of him and only seconds after Dumbledore forced him into the bed, he was fast asleep. Madam Pomfrey removed his shoes and covered him with a blanket. He also walked over to Harry and, with another wave of his hand, changed his clothes into the more comfortable Hospital Wing standard pajamas.

"Are you going to tell Harry's friends yet?" she whispered as she began injecting a few potions into Harry's arm to try to help his recovery along, if there would be one.

"No. We'll have to see what happens with Harry's condition first," he said quietly. "I need to go collect Draco, are you going to be okay with watching over them?"

Madam Pomfrey raised her eyebrow in annoyance.

"Oh right. Of course you are. Simple slip of the tongue, Poppy, take no offense," he said with an amused smile.

"That's right I can watch over my patients, Albus. Now you go on, I'll see you in the morning," she said, showing him out.

After the headmaster disappeared with a vial of the needed sleeping potion, Madam Pomfrey walked up to Harry's bedside.

"Come on now, Harry. You can do this. You need to come out of this. A lot of people need you," she said quietly.

She sat down beside his bed, gently took his hand, and began quietly telling him what his friends were going through, and why he needed to pull through.

"And you want to know a secret? Even your snarky old potions master who hates everybody needs you. He'd rather die than admit it, but I can tell. I don't know how you did it, but you've made him care about someone. If you leave now, right after opening that door, I fear it will close again and will never be able to be reopened. You can't let that happen, all right?" she said quietly. "You need to keep living to keep some other people living. That's the burden you take on when people love you."

The next morning, Snape woke to find himself staring into the watchful face of the school nurse, causing him a bit of a start.

"Poppy, do you have to stand over me like that? I'm not used to being bloody stared at in my sleep!"

"Oh quit your griping, Severus. I was checking to make sure that spell or those potions didn't have any side effects. However, you are

your normal self, unfortunately,” she teased. Snape shot her a not-so-menacing glare.

Suddenly he shot up in bed.

“How’s Harry?” he asked, looking over at the still unconscious boy. “Has he woken yet?”

“No. I’ve got him on nutrition and hydration potions to try to make up for the absence of food and water for practically a week,” she said as Snape got out of bed, ignoring her stern gaze. “But he hasn’t changed at all,” she said tiredly. Snape looked over and studied her face.

“Poppy, you’ve been up the whole night. I’ll watch over Harry for a bit and you go get some rest,” he said sternly, slipping into the chair next to Harry’s bed.

She looked at him with a sly grin.

“What happened to ‘Potter’?”

“That’s what I said,” he said quickly.

“Oh really? So I was just imagining that you called him ‘Harry’ twice this morning?” she asked, clearly amused.

“Lack of sleep,” he grumbled with a glare. Madam Pomfrey chuckled.

“Suuure, Severus. Me and my crazy imagination,” she said sarcastically. She then became sincere. “He needs you Severus.”

Snape’s eyebrow shot up. “What?”

“It’s true,” she said simply.

“Poppy, I really think you need some sleep,” he scoffed.

“He told me you’ve helped him a lot this year. Do you realize that you were the first to know about both his relatives and the cancer? When

I asked him if he had talked to anybody about his life at his relatives, he said he had confided in you. And when I told him that I found that slightly surprising, he said he trusted you. Do you understand how little people have Harry's trust? He told you something he's told no one else about, something he's guarded like his life depended on it."

"He only told me that because he was only half-conscious at the time," he informed her.

"Severus, do you know how many times I've tried to question him while he's half-conscious? When that boy wants a secret kept from someone, they won't find it out by Harry telling them. Maybe he just needed to get it all off his chest, but the point is that he chose to confide in you."

"It doesn't make sense, Poppy, why would he choose me of all people?" Snape asked, bewildered.

"Well, the papers did say he was mentally unstable," she said with a shrug, laughing when Snape glared at her. "Who knows, Severus, the point is that he did. Well, I'm off to sleep. If he wakes up, just yell."

Snape nodded distractedly, thinking of what Madam Pomfrey had just said. He eyed the raven-haired boy wondering if there could have been any truth in her words.

Throughout the day, Snape and Madam Pomfrey took turns watching over Harry while Dumbledore helped Remus keep Sirius from going back to look for Harry's body.

While switching shifts at one point during the day, with Madam Pomfrey going to stay with the Gryffindor while Snape came out, a second year Hufflepuff came into the hospital wing, supported by two of his friends. It was obvious the boy had twisted his ankle and was in extreme pain. When the three saw Snape, they froze.

"Er...is Madam Pomfrey in, sir?" one of them asked, trying not to let his voice shake.

“Not at the moment. Lay him on that bed,” he instructed.

“Who’s going to heal me then?” the injured boy asked.

“I will,” Snape said coldly. The boy paled.

“Actually, I’m not hurt. We’re going to go now,” he said quickly. His friends obviously agreed and helped him turn around.

“Get in here now,” Snape instructed harshly. The three reluctantly turned around and got their friend to the bed, each of them watching Snape suspiciously, as if he was planning on poisoning them.

Snape rolled his eyes and couldn’t help thinking that Harry wouldn’t have had a problem with him healing him.

“Er...s-so you can heal, Professor?” one squeaked in fright.

“Of course I can, Cauldwell,” he snapped. “I brew half the potions in here. And stop that pathetic whimpering, Whitby, you just twisted it, you didn’t rip it off for Merlin’s sake!”

He healed the ankle with a quick spell and told the boy to be on his way. The three practically ran from the infirmary. He heard one say quietly that he’d never go back to the Hospital Wing if Snape was going to be the new healer, even if his foot did get ripped off.

He scowled at their retreating backs before using the fire in Madam Pomfrey’s office to Floo to his chambers.

That evening, while nearly everyone else was at dinner, Snape was sitting next to a still unconscious Harry Potter, flipping through a potions book that he’d already read.

He was trying to read the same paragraph for the fifth time when he saw something out of the corner of his eye. He set down his book and watched the boy next to him very closely.

Harry’s fingers twitched, and Snape’s breath hitched. He quickly got out of the chair and sat next to Harry on the bed.

“Harry?”

A faint moan came from the boy.

“Harry, come on. Open your eyes. It’s time to wake up,” he said quietly, holding his breath without realizing it.

It was obvious Harry was trying to swallow, but his throat was too dry. He whimpered painfully. Snape carefully pulled Harry into a half-sitting position, propping up the pillows behind him.

“Come on Harry, you can do it. Just open your eyes and I’ll give you some water to drink, all right?”

He dimmed the lights a bit with a flick of the wand so the light wouldn’t hurt the boy’s eyes. Harry’s eyes slowly fluttered open.

“Professor?” he whispered tiredly. He blinked. “M alive,” he croaked in awe, wincing as his voice grated against his dry throat.

Snape never knew what came over him in that moment to make him act so out of character. He was just so overwhelmed with knowing that Harry was alive and was going to pull through. For the first time in his life, he felt envious of James Potter for being the boy’s father. He grabbed Harry and pulled him to his chest in a hug, letting a few silent tears drip into the boy’s hair.

At first Harry stiffened in his arms, not used to being hugged, especially not by Snape. Yet as he felt what could only be a tear drip down the back of his neck, he tentatively hugged him back.

“Poppy! Poppy, he’s awake!” he yelled as he gently helped Harry lay back on his pillows. “Say a word about that to anyone, and you’ll spend the rest of your life in detention,” he whispered, quickly wiping the few tears off his face.

Harry grinned tiredly. “Blackmail...excellent,” he joked with a rough, tired voice. Snape poured a cup of water and helped Harry drink it as Madam Pomfrey burst into the room.

“Oh Merlin, he’s awake! He’s back! I just sent the message to Albus,” she said excitedly grinning from ear to ear. “How are you feeling, Harry? I need you to tell me everything exactly, okay?”

“How am I alive?” he asked as his voice slowly returned, ignoring the nurse’s inquiries. His eyes suddenly widened and he sat up quickly. “Did the spell work? Is everyone okay? Is Voldemort—”

“Yes, dear. He’s dead. Everyone’s fine, well physically. As for you being alive, it’s a long complicated explanation, but you can thank your potions professor for that one,” she said, grinning at Snape who merely rolled his eyes. She leaned in and said in a loud whisper, “He really cares about you, you know.”

Harry blushed, but Snape looked absolutely mortified. “Weren’t you asking him how he was feeling, Poppy?” he asked in an irritated tone.

“Of course, now let’s hear it, Harry.”

“Er...I’m just a bit tired and I feel a bit lightheaded. And it sort of hurts,” he said, slightly embarrassed.

“Hurts where?” Madam Pomfrey asked worriedly.

“Er...well, no one place in particular,” he said shyly. The two adults both knew by now that this was Harry’s way of saying everywhere. But the two adults were at a loss for the cause. “Erm...it might be from the Cruciatus curse?” he prompted.

“Oh my goodness of course!” the nurse said abruptly. “Oh it must seem like it just happened to you! Oh, let me go grab some potions from my office, I’ll be right back!” she said before racing from the room.

“How long have I been out? And where am I?” he asked.

“You’re in a secret room of the Hospital Wing. You died last Friday. We brought you back yesterday evening and it’s now Thursday,” Snape said.

“So I actually died?” he said in awe. “I thought there was no spell to bring back the dead.”

“There isn’t a spell to bring back a destroyed life energy, so that’s true in a sense, but your life energy wasn’t destroyed. I’ll explain it all later. Now I need you to be absolutely honest with me, Harry, do you feel sick at all?” he asked carefully. If any part of the cancer had stayed in the boy’s system, it would just grow and kill him again. Harry just looked up at him in wonder.

“You just called me Harry,” he said in a near whisper. Snape’s eyes widened and he quickly cleared his throat.

“Answer the...”

“You can, you know, call me Harry, if you want,” he said shyly. Snape inwardly smiled, but outwardly raised an eyebrow.

“Do. you. feel. sick. Harry?” he asked, emphasizing each word to make sure the boy didn’t dodge the question again. The raven-haired boy took a moment to assess how he felt.

“No,” he said in shock.

The medi-witch chose that moment to return with the potion, the headmaster following right behind her, his eye twinkling truly for the first time since before the attack.

“All right dear, drink some of that up. It will help fight the effects of that awful spell,” she said handing him a glass. “Imagine, using that on a boy! If I could get my hands on some of those Death Eaters, ooh, they’d be sorry,” she said angrily. Harry chuckled slightly at the thought of the Death Eaters cowering as the school nurse came after them with the same stern look she’d given him each time he was injured in Quidditch.

“Down girl,” Snape muttered under his breath.

Harry had to bite his lip to keep from bursting out in laughter.

“Albus, I think it’s gone, but you need to make sure,” Snape said grimly, praying that they hadn’t missed anything. Harry looked up at them confusedly.

“What’s gone?” he asked.

“Lay down Harry and just relax. I just need to do a quick test, all right?” the headmaster said warmly.

Harry nodded and laid back on his pillows, closing his eyes in an attempt to relax.

Dumbledore took his wand and said a quick spell. Nothing happened. The three adults sighed happily.

“All right, Harry,” Dumbledore said cheerfully. Harry sat up and looked up at them expectantly. Dumbledore took out the crystal from his pocket, a red substance trapped inside. “This, Harry, is your cancer,” he said handing the crystal to the boy.

Harry looked from the crystal to the headmaster in confusion. “What?”

“Professor Snape found an apparently successful way to get rid of your cancer,” Dumbledore explained with the first genuine smile he’d had all week.

Harry looked to the potions master with his jaw hanging open. “I’m cured?” he asked in awe. “You cured me?”

“Yes. I wasn’t going to let you get away with skipping out on advanced potions. I do expect top-notch marks on all your exams,” he said sternly. Harry nodded dumbly.

“But wait, if the cancer’s gone, that’s what made my magic get all powerful. Is that all gone?” he asked.

“Well, there’s one way to find out,” Dumbledore said nodding toward an empty glass. Harry looked at it and concentrated on making it move. Nothing happened.

“No more stealing Hermione’s food then, I guess,” he said, only slightly disappointed. “I think I’d rather have it this way though,” he said with a smirk, handing the red crystal back to Dumbledore.

“All right, Harry, we’re going to move you into the main part of the Hospital Wing. Are you ready to deal with some very hysterical people?” Dumbledore asked in amusement.

Harry nodded and got out of bed. Dumbledore kept a light hold on Harry’s arm to steady him as he walked through Madam Pomfrey’s office into the empty infirmary, slipping into his usual bed, discretely checking for his initials. He was glad to see they were still there.

Dumbledore disappeared to gather Harry’s friends and such. Snape also left, as the young Malfoy had been left alone far too much with his grief lately.

Madam Pomfrey looked on her guard for anyone who might bother Harry, casting fond smiles at him every once in awhile as she bustled around the Hospital Wing, doing whatever it was she usually bustled around doing.

“I guess I’ll be making my birthday after all,” Harry said happily.

“I’ll send you a present myself,” Madam Pomfrey said warmly.

Dumbledore knocked on the door to Remus’s private chambers. A very haggard professor opened the door, giving the headmaster a sad smile.

“Come in, Professor. Sirius is sleeping so we’ll have to be a bit quiet,” he said, closing the door after allowing Dumbledore inside.

“Actually, I think you’d better go wake him,” he said, his face not betraying any particular emotion.

“Is something going on?” Remus asked warily, not sure he could stand anything else happening at the moment.

“Yes, the first good news we’ve had in awhile.”

Remus nodded and quickly waked Sirius, leading him in from the other room.

Sirius looked awful, to put it bluntly. It reminded the headmaster of how the man had first looked after escaping from Azkaban, before Harry had reminded him about the better parts of life. He had dark circles under his eyes, which were absent of life.

“Sirius, Remus, please take a seat. I have some very good news,” Dumbledore said gently. The two looked completely apathetic, not believing that anything could make them feel better at the moment. They took their seats on the couch across from Dumbledore.

“So what’s this good news, Albus?” Remus asked, trying extremely hard to put on an upbeat façade for Sirius. Sirius only looked blankly ahead.

“Severus has been working on a lot of research that has finally resulted in success. Harry was dead, but his life energy was never destroyed.”

The two looked up at him perplexedly. “What does that mean?” Remus asked, not daring to get hopeful.

“Severus has been able to return Harry’s life energy, and separated the cancer from it. Harry’s alive,” he said with a smile. The two looked at him in shock.

“Where?” Sirius asked quickly.

“In the Hospital Wing.”

Without another word, Sirius turned into his dog form and bounded from the room at top speed. Remus gave another stunned, wordless glance at the grinning headmaster, before racing after the black dog.

Students jumped out of the way to avoid being run into by the huge black dog speeding down the hall. As he got to the Hospital Wing, he turned back into a human and threw open the door.

Harry's head whipped up as the door banged open and Sirius simply stared at him, unsure whether to believe the sight before him. He had dreamed of this happening and wasn't sure if this was just another one of his fantasies.

"Sirius?"

That was all it took. Sirius burst into tears and was immediately at Harry's side, hugging the boy desperately and weeping. Harry hugged him back and nestled into his godfather's embrace.

"It's okay, Sirius. I'm here. I'm alive. And I'm not sick anymore! I'm going to be alive for a very long time," Harry muttered comfortingly as his godfather continued to sob and clutch him tightly to his chest.

"You're alive. You're alive," Sirius whispered through his tears. He grabbed the sides of Harry's face and looked into the boy's eyes searchingly. "I love you so much. You're like a son to me, do you understand?"

Bright green eyes looked back at him, acknowledging the sincerity behind the statement with a small bit of surprise. He nodded. "I—I love you too," he said awkwardly.

Sirius smiled and burst out into a new fit of sobs, causing Harry to smile as well. The ex-convict pulled his godson back into another tight embrace when the door banged open once again. Both heads whipped toward the door to find an out of breath and stunned Remus.

"Moony, he's alive," Sirius sniffed happily, waving his friend over. Remus walked over slowly, still stunned.

“Hey Moony,” he said with a smile.

“Harry?” he whispered, cautiously touching Harry’s cheek. When he felt that Harry was indeed solid and real, he burst out in a sob and jumped into the hug.

“Oh sure, just go and jump on my patients, that’s right,” Madam Pomfrey said in annoyance as she watched the scene. Harry laughed and the two adults just ignored her. “Now seriously you too, Harry is just having the after effects of the Cruciatus curse, so you too better stop squeezing him so hard. Let him get some air.”

This time they listened and looked at Harry worriedly as they broke away, letting Harry lean back on his pillows.

“Harry,” Sirius said seriously, “Now, you’ve been a great hero for the first fifteen years of your life. Let’s leave it at that, okay? No vanquishing any Dark Lords from now on, okay?”

“Aw, you’re no fun,” Harry said in a fake pout.

“I’m serious, Harry.”

“I know you’re Sirius! It’s your first name!”

Remus laughed.

“Oh no, I knew one day that joke would come back to bite me,” Sirius said. “Anyway, I’m not kidding, Harry. No more of these sacrifices okay? No more fighting Dark Lords, no more taking other people’s illnesses for yourself, no more keeping secrets that are eating you up inside, all right? Those are the rules from now on.”

“Well, it’s a bit different than normal house rules, but I think I can live with them,” Harry said grinning. “Er...so tomorrow, when I get to King’s Cross, I’m...” he trailed off hopefully.

“You are never going back to the Dursleys, if that’s what you’re thinking about, Harry,” Remus almost growled. Sirius nodded firmly. Harry beamed.

"I'll pick you up from King's Cross and you'll be coming home with me," Sirius said happily.

Harry beamed at him.

"Really?"

"Of course! What, did you think I was joking last time we talked about this. You need to learn to take me seriously, as serious is my middle name. Oh wait, it's my..."

"First name," Harry finished for him. "Merlin, this is going to be a long summer," he teased.

Dumbledore's office was getting a bit crowded. Hermione, Ron, and Eloise were sitting on a small couch while Fred, George and Neville sat on the floor in front of the couch. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley were standing next to their children, having Apparated to the edge of the Hogwarts wards after receiving an owl with an urgent message from Dumbledore.

Professor McGonagall appeared with the Stensons. He had sent the Gryffindor Head of House to bring the Muggle family there. Nobody knew the reason they were all assembled.

Mr. and Mrs. Stenson shook hands with the Weasley parents, while Kota gave each of Harry's friends a greeting hug. She had red-rimmed eyes and a red-tipped nose from the constant crying she'd been doing over the past week. She slid onto the floor in between George and Neville.

"Do you know why we're here?" she asked quietly as everyone was getting settled.

"We're guessing it's about the funeral," he said sadly. Kota nodded sorrowfully.

"That's what we figured."

Dumbledore looked to the students. "I presume that you could not find Ginny?" he asked gently.

They all shook their heads, minus Kota.

"She's missing, and so is Harry's invisibility cloak," Ron said numbly.

"She's still grieving. We figured that funeral arrangement stuff would be too much for her anyways," explained Fred.

"I wish she could have been here, but we'll just have to track her down soon. We are not here to talk about a funeral. In fact, I have a bit of good news," Dumbledore said, his eye twinkling especially bright.

"Good news? I thought we were here about Harry," Mrs. Weasley said confusedly.

"Yeah, why are we here then?" Mrs. Stenson chimed in.

Dumbledore put up a silencing hand. "Actually, it is about Harry."

He began to explain the spells and potions that had saved Harry but quickly realized he was talking to a very perplexed audience, who looked more pained at talking about Harry than relieved as they should have been. Dumbledore stopped and smiled.

"What I'm trying to say is that Harry is alive and cancer-free," he said bluntly. A room full of people stared back at him in uncomprehending shock.

"What?" Hermione asked breathlessly.

"Anyone who cares for the explanation can stay, anyone who cares to skip it and just go see for themselves can use this door right here."

He stood and said, "Hospital Wing waiting room," before opening the door. Everyone stared through the door, stunned.

"Professor? I don't understand," Fred said. "He can't be."

“Albus? What’s going on?” asked Professor McGonagall.

“Why don’t you all just follow me,” he said, motioning toward the door. They all dazedly got up and walked through to the waiting room. Once they were all through and the door had disappeared, Dumbledore opened the door to the Hospital Wing, motioning them all through. They slowly entered the room, and all grouped near the entrance, looking in wonder at the scene before them.

Remus was sitting back in a chair laughing as Sirius was stacking food on Harry’s lap who was just as quickly putting it all on the nightstand.

“Sirius! I’m not bloody hungry!” Harry insisted with a laugh, pushing the plate in his godfather’s hand away. Sirius put the plate back on the table and felt Harry’s forehead. Harry rolled his eyes and pushed his hand away. “And for the millionth time, I’m not sick!”

Suddenly, Harry noticed the entourage at the doorway and looked up at them with his brilliant green eyes.

Mrs. Weasley gasped and covered her mouth with her hand.

“Harry?” Ron asked breathlessly.

“Yeah Ron, it’s me,” he said with a smile. He quickly got out of bed and stood up, shooting Sirius a playful glare as the man started protesting. “Don’t worry guys, I’m really al—oomph!” he said as Ron raced over to him and flung his arms around Harry’s neck. Hermione was right behind him, nearly knocking Harry over as she slammed into the other two. His two best friends began to cry, just when they thought they had no more tears to spill.

“Oh Harry, it’s really you. I’m not dreaming!” Hermione sobbed, hugging him tightly.

“You’re back, you’re back,” Ron muttered. He was shaking uncontrollably.

“Ron are you okay?” Harry whispered. Ron shook his head into his shoulder but said nothing else.

Before Harry could think of something to say to his distraught friend, Eloise and Neville ran up with tears of joy. They were followed closely by the twins and Kota, until it looked like a huge dog-pile with Harry in the center.

“Oh Harry dear!” sobbed another voice. Harry looked up to see the Weasley parents. Mrs. Weasley looked as if she had been restraining herself (or having Mr. Weasley restrain her). She now burst out and ran to him, the other kids jumping out of the way as she came through, pulling him into a motherly embrace. She cried hysterically as she planted kisses in Harry’s hair. The other kids shot each other looks and giggled at Mrs. Weasley’s behavior.

Mr. Weasley came up joined his wife, fondly ruffling Harry’s hair with a laugh.

The tearful Stenson parents were next. Mr. Weasley pulled his wife into his own arms to allow the Stensons their turn at hugging the boy that had saved their family.

When they pulled away from the embrace, the group of kids all swarmed in on Harry again, causing Harry to blush and the two remaining Marauders to burst out in laughter.

Harry had received more hugs in one day than he had in his entire life. He was beaming with joy.

“Okay guys,” Harry laughed after a few minutes, “I really need to breathe now.”

Nobody budged. Madam Pomfrey came in and shrieked.

“What is this! Now Harry, get back into bed. Am I the only sane one in this place? This boy is recovering from extreme subjection to the Cruciatus Curse! Are you all mad? Now shoo!” she said, waving her hands at the people surrounding Harry. They let go of him, now eyeing him like he would break at the slightest touch.

“Oh Harry, we didn’t mean to hurt you!” Hermione gasped.

“It’s okay, ‘Mione, I think some people are overreacting a bit,” he said, directing the comment at Madam Pomfrey.

“And some people better get back in bed if they want to be released for the feast tomorrow,” she said sternly. Harry rolled his eyes and climbed back into bed, sitting up against his pillows. Remus laughed and ruffled Harry’s hair.

“Tough luck, kid,” he said with a smile.

“I know you’re all excited, but let’s try not to injure my patient further, all right?” she said irritably.

“Where’s Ginny?” Harry asked.

“Professor McGonagall’s looking for her now,” Hermione told him, a small smile playing on her lips.

Practically everyone’s eyes were brimming with tears, those of shock and those of joy. Ron and Hermione sat on the bed on either side of Harry, while the Fred and Neville sat on the bottom. Everyone else surrounded the bed, and Harry couldn’t help but feel a bit overwhelmed.

Luckily, Madam Pomfrey came to his rescue.

“All right! This is ridiculous! We’re going to do this in smaller groups. Sirius, Remus, you’ve had your turns, ah ah ah, don’t you protest to me! Out, out!” she barked. Sirius glared, but her own glare won out. Remus and Sirius grudgingly left, promising to be back first thing the next morning.

“Okay, the Stensons can go first. Everybody else...out to the waiting room! There you can discuss the order in which you go. Minerva, perhaps it might be a good idea to try to find young Miss Weasley.”

The Gryffindor Head of House nodded, still stunned, and left the room.

Everyone grumbled on their way out. Ron still looked severely shaken. Hermione and Mrs. Weasley were still crying buckets through their smiles, Hermione whispering comforting words to Ron as Mrs. Weasley did the same for the twins. A teary Eloise held onto Neville, who looked unsure whether to believe his eyes yet.

Madam Pomfrey shut the door behind them and went into her office, ordering Harry to stay relaxed.

"Very pushy woman, eh?" Kota said quietly.

"You have no idea," Harry said with a smile.

"Oh Harry sweetie, oh God, when we heard about what happened, I can't tell you how much grief we went through," Mrs. Stenson said, grabbing Harry's hand tearfully.

"You made me cry for five days straight, you bloody prat!" Kota said, wiping a tear away and then playfully punching Harry on the arm.

"Thank God you're alive," Mr. Stenson said quietly. "Thank God you're not sick anymore. Listen Harry, you're going to visit us over the summer so much you're going to be completely sick of us, whether you want to or not," he said with a smile. Harry laughed. "And if anything happens with your godfather, and I mean even the slightest row or even if you're just annoyed with him, you come right to our house, all right? You still have the key?"

Harry nodded and then grinned. "Yeah, but I'll probably be coming through the fireplace."

"Like Santa Clause," Kota mused.

"Without the weird clothes," Harry added.

"Or the pot belly. You know, your headmaster looks a bit like Santa Clause on Weight Watchers," Kota said thoughtfully. Harry burst out laughing.

"But seriously, anything you ever need, you have us, all right?" Mr. Stenson insisted.

"That's right, we're here for you, love," Mrs. Stenson added.

"Whether you like it or not," Kota threw in. "You're family. You're stuck with us. Though hopefully my dad won't try to be overprotective with your dating life as well."

"No dating until you're married, Harry, and any potentials will have to meet our approval," Mr. Stenson said, causing everyone to laugh.

"We'll just have to make sure he gets on with the Weasleys very well then, right Harry?" Kota said quietly, in a conspiring type manner. Harry blushed and glared at Kota, glancing nervously at the closed door to the waiting room.

"Kota!" he hissed.

"What is this Harry? You fancy Weasley girl? Oh that's adorable!" Mrs. Stenson said quite loudly. The three others shushed her.

"Muuuum!" Kota whined, embarrassed for her mum blurting out Harry's secret so loud.

"Oh right, shhh," Mrs. Stenson said putting a finger to her lips and nodding excitedly, as if she was now in on a huge secret. Harry just put his head in his hands and shook his head, praying that none of the Weasleys had heard.

"All right, we'd better get going before my lovely wife embarrasses you any further, Harry," said Mr. Stenson, giving a chuckle when his wife slapped his arm. "Stenson girls and hitting, don't think that's a really good trait."

"Yeah, I'll have to warn a certain redhead about it," Harry said quietly with a wink at Kota.

"Oh you mean George?" Mrs. Stenson asked loudly. Harry burst out laughing. Mr. Stenson shook his head while Kota's eyes widened.

“Muuuum!” Kota cried indignantly throwing her hands in the air.

“Oh love, don’t you worry. He can’t hear us through the door. And don’t you worry Harry, neither can...”

She was cut off as Kota covered her mouth with her hand. “Mum, how about not talking about who anyone fancies until we get out of hearing range,” she said quietly.

“All right, well we’ll see you later, Harry. We’ll invite you, your godfather, and the Weasleys over soon,” said Mr. Stenson, giving Harry a quick hug goodbye. The two females did the same before walking out the door. He heard a “Muum” out in the halls and immediately became very worried.

Seconds later, Eloise came into the room, closing the door behind her.

“Dakota’s mum’s a bit odd. In the hall somebody mentioned Ginny, and Mrs. Stenson turned to her husband saying, ‘Oh, just isn’t that adorable?’ Do you know what she meant, Harry?” she asked, taking a seat on the edge of his bed.

“Not a clue,” Harry muttered, hoping his blush wasn’t too obvious.

“Sure you don’t,” she said, revealing that she wasn’t as clueless about the situation as she had led him to believe. “You’ve got to remember Harry, I’m a hopeless romantic. I notice these things long before anyone else. We’re going to be having a long chat about this at some point, so I want you to start brainstorming now. I’m going to need to know when you first knew you were in love, what the marriage proposal will be like, and possible names for kids for starters.”

At seeing the horrified look on Harry’s face she patted his hand.

“Just joking Harry,” she said with a smile. Harry sighed with relief. “Actually I’m not, you’ll be coming over this summer for a nice long conversation. Don’t worry, I’m going to force Neville into one too.

He's got it a lot worse than you, since he has to figure out who he fancies and you already know!"

"Oh dear God," he muttered.

"Well, hey, if you humor me, I can give you tips. I may not be the most experience person with relationships, but I do share a dorm with four other girls."

"Hmm...we'll see," Harry said mysteriously with a smirk.

"Harry?"

"Yeah?"

"Thank you for being my friend. You and Neville are really my first true friends and it means a lot to me," she said quietly.

"Eloise, you don't have to thank me for being your friend. I love being your friend just because of who you are. You're a great person to be around and I feel sorry for all those people who don't get to be your friend. I'm lucky! So thank you."

Eloise blushed. "I also want you to know how much it meant to me for you to take me to the dance. I didn't get to go last year and I didn't think anyone would ask me this year either. It was all the girls were talking about and you don't know how much it meant to me to be able to join into their conversation without being pitied or something. And I wasn't even going with just old any date, I was going with Harry Potter, one of the hottest boys in school!"

Harry blushed and his jaw dropped slightly in surprise. He hadn't been expecting for Eloise to say that. "Oh brother," he murmured.

"Oh shut it. You are and you know it."

Harry just laughed. "I'll have to make sure to inform your future husband about your psychotic tendencies."

“Harry, are you seriously that oblivious? Why do you think Cho was after you so much? Oh piss it. Never mind. Anyways, what I was trying to say, was thank you for taking me to the dance even with half the school after you for a date, which I’m sure had nothing to do with you being good-looking, since they had no idea what your personality is like.”

Harry rolled his eyes. “It’s called unwanted fame, but back to the more important subject, you don’t need to thank me for the dance. I want to thank you! I had so much fun with you! Besides, what other date would have let me dance with all those other girls? You’re just plain cool, Eloise,” he said cheerily.

“Ah, I only let you do that because I wanted to dance with their dates,” she said with a grin, nudging his side playfully. “You’re a great friend, you know.”

“As are you.”

“I guess it’s probably someone else’s turn, but you’re going to come over this summer for that chat.”

“Er...we’ll see about that conversation. Neville and I will have to plan some diversionary tactics or something,” he said with a smirk. Eloise gave him a quick hug and left.

Neville was the next to come in. He looked a bit nervous as he closed the door behind him and walked over. He was a bit sniffly from getting teary and sat down next to Harry. He looked down at his lap.

“Harry? Do you ever miss your parents?” he asked quietly. Harry was a bit stunned. The question certainly caught him off guard. He quickly snapped out of it when he figured out where the conversation might be headed. Neville didn’t know that Harry knew about his parents.

“Yes. I mean, I don’t really remember them all that much, but I always wondered what it would be like to have them,” he said quietly.

"You know, I don't think I've ever admitted that out loud before," he said truthfully.

Neville took a deep breath as his eyes brimmed slightly with tears. "Mine were Aurors. Death Eaters put them under the Cruciatus Curse for too long. They wanted information, you see, and my parents wouldn't tell them. They, er...they went mad from the torture. They have to be in a special ward at St. Mungo's. They don't recognize me anymore."

Neville finally looked up nervously, waiting for Harry's reaction.

"They sound like they were really brave," Harry said quietly.

"They were. I wish I could have been more like them. Brave and brilliant at magic," he said sadly.

"Neville, listen to me. You are really brave! And you have talent with magic, you just aren't confident enough to see it or use it. But really, like in our first year when you stood up to me, Ron, and Hermione when we kept sneaking out, I would never have had the guts to do that! I just know you and I know how you are. I'd trust you with my life," Harry insisted sincerely. Neville looked at him in surprise.

"I think you've cracked, mate," he said weakly.

"Well, whether I've cracked or not, I know I'm right about this, and I really meant what I said."

Neville smiled genuinely.

"I'm sorry about your parents, that's got to be rough," Harry said, a bit awkwardly.

"Well, I figured you'd know what it's like," he said with a shrug. "Well, I think my time's about up. I'm glad you're back, Harry. Eloise said something about inviting us over this summer. Something about planning our love lives. I don't know, she said she'll explain it later."

Harry chuckled. "I think it's time to start being scared."

The two said their goodbyes.

A/N: No folks, I am not just randomly ending the story or a chapter here (well, not really). This chapter is CONTINUED in chapter 39 since I went a bit overboard writing this last chapter and it ended up being 40 pages long!! The next chapter picks off in the same scene as this one, so roll on!! But I'm doing review responses here! Okay, I really hope I got everyone, since my computer's acting a bit odd right now.

Wiccan PussyKat: Lookie here, you're at the top for having the longest and most reviews of the chapter! And for just being hella cool. Lol. That was an awesome site! That's exactly it with the candlelight vigil! I am obsessed. I need meetings or fanfiction rehab or something. I'm an addict!! Sorry you don't like Ginny too much. Next chapter, just pretend she's someone else you do like LOL. Never too sappy for Harry, *sniff* he's such a brave soul *bites fist to keep from sobbing* lol. I'm so glad you liked the vigil. I was worried it was going to be too corny and considered taking it out. Lol, unfortunately, my knowledge doesn't apply to the real world. I can figure out random life-energy/ potion/ spell, things, but see me in action in math class and it's a joke. Lol. Hehehe, you know me and cliffies, I just enjoy dropping them in my chapters and watching people fall off them. Lol. Yup, Thotheka was a combination of the Egyptian god Thoth (the god of healing) and Heka (the goddess of magic). Voila. I had to make it hard though so people wouldn't guess it and then figure out the ending I was shamelessly foreshadowing. Lol, Lion King rocks, but is very sad!

Velith: Never fear, Snape is here! Lol, nah, wouldn't kill off my Snapey poo! He's too much of a cutie. Remus won't die!! He can't! He's too cool. That's sooo cool about your friend. I can't believe she was drawing fanart for my story!! If she will, tell her to send it to me. I adore fanart. How can you hate fanfiction? That's just wrong. Lol. OMG, please tell me you are kidding that that guy's going to play

Voldie!! UGH! He's Mr. Bean though!! That's just not right. They better make him look incredibly freaky or I'm going to pitch a fit.

Myr Halcyon: I updated too early? Lol, that's not something I hear very often. Well, what you must understand about the characters in the last few chapters is that people, when grieving over a tragedy, often act out of character. I mean, how often is Ron and the twins so solemn? But some act differently. Me, I always laugh and make jokes and then get angry. It's my strange way of dealing, and McGonagall has her own strange way of dealing. I'm glad you like Draco! I like him too. Lol. Well, the thing with Harry is that he wasn't truly dead. His life energy was only in a sort of limbo, but hadn't been destroyed, so Dumbledore's right. No spell can wake the dead (which in this fic means that nothing can bring back a destroyed life energy), but Harry's life energy wasn't destroyed and therefore, he wasn't technically dead. Just his body was. If that still makes no sense, email me and I can explain. Lol, you like alliteration. Keep an eye out for the twins next part of chapter with their "purely professional prank."

Erin: That's so awesome that you said Oh Merlin. I'll probably do that at some point too! Great question about the Cho thing. Though I'm not fond of Cho (probably because I'm such a H/G shipper for canon, that she's a threat grrr), I don't hate her. See, I wrote most of this fic pre-fifth book. I started it last January or something. I really wanted a character like Cho so I could start to play up the celebrity aspect that I think J.K. sometimes ignores. I mean, Harry's so well known, that I always wondered why he hadn't already been stalked in Hogsmeade or getting fanmail and stuff, especially when those articles started coming out fourth year. I dunno, I wanted a character like how I made Cho, and she was the easiest to place in that position. I wrote this before J.K. had fluffed out her character a bit, but didn't want to change it after. It was just something where I wanted to show that some characters had more depth, but that some were frighteningly shallow, just like people are in real life. In fact, after this fic, I feel a bit bad about all the Cho-bashing. Lol, but there's no turning back now.

Chibi-Bex: You really did get incredibly close with that guess. That sounds like a fun Christmas to me! I usually just stay at home (which

worked well this year since I got to work on my fic). Lol, I think my creative kidnapping George and Fred to make them our husband ideas are all out. Maybe we could just walk in with the silly string, gum, and rope, see them, throw the tools over our shoulders and just go snog them, entrancing them with our good charms. Lol.

Lady Abbey Bartlet: Well, if you want a longer chapter, this one (part 1 and part 2) are 30 pages total!! Not including A/Ns or review responses. I think before this my longest was 14. Yeah, Jane Austen's the author. It was pretty good, though a bit tedious to get through. Lol, I still haven't decided what to do with those two. You never know. Dumbledore told the mourners to go to the Quidditch pitch, put up signs, whatever. They didn't just randomly decide to do it there (though they could since the wards are currently destroyed), but that would be the perfect place for a memorial since the front steps would be a bit inconvenient. You got it! (with the spell/potion things) Okay, I'll definitely go back and check it over before I end up printing it out. There are probably tons in here. I just tend to look over them.

HG/HrRFan4ever: my sister's penname's Torrlev. I'm so glad you're going to give her fics a try! I'm so glad you can picture what I'm writing. I'd be curious to know if it was the same as what I picture. I always wonder that. You know, I don't know about Ginny's name? I sometimes mentally blur the lines between fanfics and canon so I can't be too certain. It makes sense though, doesn't it? Hmmm...now that's going to bug me and I'll have to do a search of the books at some point.

Thundering Lights: so wait you love me? Hahaha. You know, someone was reading your review when they were talking with me and they thought it was a flame. And then they said it was by you and I was like, nah, Thundering Lights is not a flamer. And I was right lol. Nope, for once in the fic, I actually did something predictable and simple (well in the both lived sense, though Harry will have a really weak immune system for the rest of his life, but he can deal :) lol, I was laughing so hard at your line: *holds a teddy bear that is wearing a t-shirt reading "Draco" and has a "Draco's #1!" flag in its hand*. OMG I want one! I honestly think one day when I'm bored and can manage to get some extra cash, I'm going to the Teddy Bear factory

and making this bear! Oh wow, you're so close on your search for me!! Better get a body guard.

Paranoialn2005: I loved the cookies! Oooh, I like the A.K. curse/Harry's eyes connection. Maybe that IS foreshadowing that Harry will die in the 7th book! Or maybe it was just to make Harry gorgeous. Lol. (well, he is in my mind at least) Of course! Snape and Malfoy are definitely human. They've just been through a lot. I've always felt there was something more, and then, through my wonderful character-analyzing obsession, I came to the conclusion that they are both good in their own ways, but Snape has just seen too many dark things in his life, and Malfoy has been brainwashed to be the way he is.

Dadaiiro: ah, Malfoy doesn't need that stupid family of his. They're all mean and stuff. (more in part 2). Nope, the ministry hasn't caught them. Of course, they all know who those Death Eaters are, but they haven't been caught. Looking of course, but not catching. Lol.

Also thanks to: Firestar038, horsefan (nope, just a very busy schedule. My exams are coming up though!), GrimmyD (thanks, I plan on it!), ER (if you're still confused and want an explanation, email me with what you don't understand. I know it was a bit confusing.), jo0609, ahhhh!!!, Phoenix Flight, Sirius Wolf (That's so great about the poetry contest!! I really hope you won. I'd love to hear your poem! Email it to me!), Erisinia Gazelle, tessa, Milenn Cassandra Riddle, Catiechan (you are very much welcome. I'll always remember you as my Sirius obsessed fan who inspired many of the Sirius scenes in here), water drifter (that is so cool you can do something like that with your brother. Mine despises books all together, lol, but at least I can read my own fics to my sister.), AutumnBreeze (lol, if you're still confused and want to understand the spell better, pop me an email), Delle, SlytherinSupreme, Serpent of Light (OMG that's the saddest movie ever and I totally love it. That scene with the people showing up with the candles was part of my inspiration for the candlelight vigil scene and what the Quidditch pitch looks like in my mind), dominy, Doneril, Liz (you've read it twice? Wow, that rocks! Thanks!), ChildOfDarkness, Maxennce (I did cry writing a few bits of the story, especially the Harry/Ron scene in "Friendship." I was bawling in that one since I have to picture the

scenes even more in depth than what I put on paper in order to get it right. But I love doing it!), mezzoforte, TexasJeanette (yes, that trilogy rocks, especially the first two! They're my faves), Wicked Misty, tati1, greasy sox, pennypacker, Zork the Unbearable, mell5 (lol, no kidding about the trailer! Draco's hair's just frightening), Helen, shadowarwen, wynjara, crazedbrat28, Molly Morrison, sweet775 (lol, love the poem), ratgirl, therese, lilyjamesAAF (ooh, I'm so extremely curious what you mean. I know I put a few hints in this fic, but I made them a bit hard to figure out. So please tell, what hint do you mean? If you really figured one out, congratulations to you!), Lady S, star*dust (sorry to disappoint, but I do promise to have one story in the future where Harry does die, I just can't tell you which one :), senri (hey perv, lol, your dedication's coming up part 2, along with your scene! I hope it's worthy), Energeezzer (as I told stardust, I do promise to have a fic where I do kill off a good Harry. I have it planned and everything, it just needs to be written), fantagal, Lourdes (wow, thank you!), Miss Shadow Prowl, Lindiel Eryn, Ashes7, Death-TheOnlyTrueFreedom, Jay-Jay, Terence (lol, well, you got this right! I hope you're doing well, along with your grandma. I'll pop you an email soon), PhoenixPadfoot89, holly (oops? Sorry for the disappointing ending, but as I've promised to many, I will write a fic where Harry does die), Rhysel Ash (lol, yes I watched it! I did not know it would be so long. But hey, Colin Firth? Hell yeah!), ocpawnmaster, crystal113, Maximum Poofy-Confused Queen, EriEka127, Musicstarlover, angel74 (hey, I'm reading your fic and I am in love with it! I read it for hours today until I forced myself to finish this, but I can't wait to get back to it!), Ariana Dumbledore, DaughterofDeath, Shawn Pickett, grumpygrim, xx Schizoid, Ganymade (of course! Draco's the best!), nelum, Darak, Bosson12787, ReflectionsOfReality (details details, my good friend. Lol, yes, many search for my home, but nobody can find it. It's unplottable!), LadyLilyPotter (well, I hope you understand now, but if not, feel free to email me with any questions and I can try to explain), Lily_cat, StarrGirl2, Cestrel, W'rkncacnter (lol, thanks!), krtshadow, captuniv (good, you've got it! Oh dang, you called my little nickname which you'll see in part 2. lol), pameruh qui aime malfoy, Maxwell Coffee House, athenakitty, Von, ckat44 (lol, a bit excited, are we?? Hahahaha. You crack me up! Well, you're wish is my command, or something like that.), TweedleDuh, and Romm

Author's Note: WARNING!!!! If you just flipped to this chapter without reading the last, GO BACK!! This is PART 2 of the final chapter, and it will ruin a lot if you haven't read part 1 first!! As in I've updated 2 chapters in 1 day! So make sure you've already read part one before this one!! Well, with that said, on with the show. Make sure to read the Author's Note at the end.

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The next in were the twins. They plopped down in the chairs on either side of his bed. At the same moment, the two reached over and hugged Harry. Harry tensed at the touch, then forcing himself to relax, mentally berating himself for constantly freaking at the unexpected physical touch thing. The twins broke away, ruffling his hair with a laugh. They each had to wipe a quick tear away from their cheeks. Harry smiled at the similarities of their actions. Some things would never change.

“Harry, mate, we’re going to need to have a serious conversation about this whole ‘save the world at any cost’ thing you’ve got going on,” Fred said with a grin.

George’s tone was more serious. “Yeah, Harry, you don’t know what it was like when you...” he trailed off, not able to say the word.

“Died?” Harry offered quietly. George nodded with a shiver.

“Harry, it was like losing one of the family,” Fred added solemnly.

“You can’t let us go through something like that again, it was too horrible,” said George seriously.

“So no more dangerous stuff, okay?” said Fred.

“Does that include accepting sweets from you two?” Harry joked, trying to lighten the mood. The twins gave slight smiles, but their expressions immediately turned back to serious.

“Harry, we’re serious. Please, you can’t do something like that again,” said Fred.

“We couldn’t handle it.”

Harry blushed a bit. “Never thought I’d be getting the serious talk from you two,” he said with a smile. “I mean are you guys all right?” he asked worriedly. He didn’t know what to make of serious Weasley twins.

“Well, we haven’t been in the past week...” started George.

“...but we will be now,” finished Fred. “Promise there will be no more self-sacrifices?”

Fred and George each held out their hands for Harry to shake to seal the promise. Harry grinned and crossed his arms, right over left, to shake their hands.

“Promise,” he said firmly.

"All right, enough seriousness. We developed a new prank," George said excitedly.

"You know those two sidekicks of Malfoy's? The big ugly ones?"

"Crab-face and Gargoyle or something?" George said waving a hand dismissively. Harry laughed and nodded.

"Well, they ate some very interesting cupcakes and the strangest thing happened," said Fred thoughtfully.

"Yeah, their tongues fell right out of their mouths. Really bizarre," George added. Harry's jaw dropped.

"Caused a bit of a ruckus at the Slytherin table."

"Screaming, panic, and other sorts of mayhem."

"They sort of had to carry their tongues to the Hospital Wing."

"Quite disgusting really."

Harry was laughing now. "I can't believe I missed that! I think we need a repeat performance, just to make sure my investment's going to good use and all."

"Oh of course. Purely a business thing," said George in mock-seriousness.

"A purely professional prank," Fred piped in.

"Well, best be off."

"Mum's next and she's ready to rip off the door with her teeth to get in to see you if we make her wait any longer."

"I doubt even Madam Pomfrey could hold her off," George mused. "She's a bit scary sometimes."

"We'll see you soon since we're going to force you to come over so much you'll get sick of us."

Harry chuckled. "I don't think that's possible," he said truthfully.

"Tell that to Percy. Why do you think he moved out?" George asked. The twins spouted identical evil grins.

The twins said their rather dramatic farewells and opened the door. Harry couldn't see out into the halls, but could hear Mrs. Weasley screaming, "What took you so long?!" before racing in, followed by a much calmer Mr. Weasley.

She ran over to the bed and once again pulled Harry to her in a motherly embrace, once again crying into his hair. She kissed his forehead and petted his hair with one of her hands.

"Oh Harry, never do that to me again! Do you hear me?" She took his face in both of her hands and studied him. She then began speaking at a very quick pace. "Oh dear, you look peaky. Have you eaten yet? Are you warm enough?" Harry nodded at each of her inquiries. "Oh, you come over to the Burrow soon and I'm going to cook you a huge meal. We need to start you eating more, you're far too thin! Oh thank Merlin you're back, dear! And what were you thinking not telling us that you were ill?! Merlin's beard! Well Dumbledore said you don't have that anymore, right?" she asked worriedly.

"Yeah, Professor Snape cured me. Madam Pomfrey says my immune system won't ever work the same, but no more cancer," Harry said with a grin. He still couldn't believe his good fortune.

"What do you mean about your immune system?" Mr. Weasley asked with concern.

"Oh, it's no big deal, it just can't fight off things as well anymore so I'll probably get sick a lot, like colds and stuff. But it's much better than the alternative," he explained.

“Oh dear, well whenever you’re sick, I’ll make sure to make you my special chicken soup. It’ll make you feel better!” she insisted.

“Oh you don’t have to...”Harry started uncomfortably. He doubted he would ever get used to people fussing over him.

“Of course I don’t have to. I want to, dear,” she said warmly.

Harry smiled shyly. “Er...well, thanks.”

Mrs. Weasley grinned happily, but Mr. Weasley looked oddly saddened.

“Molly, I need a few minutes alone with Harry,” he said gently. His wife looked at him in confusion, but nodded. Harry was perplexed himself.

Mrs. Weasley hugged him goodbye and left the room, shutting the door behind herself.

Mr. Weasley sat down in the chair next to Harry and looked at him sadly.

“Harry, when you...er...died,” he said cautiously, “I went to tell the Dursleys about it.”

Harry gave a bitter laugh. “I’m sure they were devastated,” he said sarcastically.

“Harry, why didn’t you ever tell us what was happening with your relatives?” he asked seriously.

In two seconds flat, the blood had drained out of Harry’s face. His eyes grew wide and he drew back as if he had been slapped. He forced himself to calm down. After all, Mr. Weasley couldn’t mean that. The Dursleys were far too careful about that sort of stuff, well, except for around the Stensons, though they did seem to be slipping a bit lately.

“Wh-what d-do you mean?” he stammered, unable to achieve the calmness he had hoped for. He prayed that Mr. Weasley wouldn’t notice, but his prayers weren’t answered. Mr. Weasley looked at him sympathetically.

“How long was your bedroom that cupboard?” he asked bluntly. Harry inwardly sighed with relief. Mr. Weasley had only discovered his cramped living conditions rather than the worse aspects of his home life. Harry looked down at his lap and twisted the sheet nervously.

“Um...until I got my Hogwarts letter and then just for a few days last Christmas. It’s not as bad as it seems though. I don’t need a lot of room,” he said quietly, hoping that this would be the last of their discussion.

“And how long has the abuse been going on?” he asked, now with a tint of anger to his voice that he was unsuccessfully trying to conceal.

“What?” Harry blurted out, eyes wide. “I don’t...I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he insisted, looking away. Had Ron told? Maybe he could play it off that there had just been a misunderstanding.

“Harry, I know. I found your shirt. The one that’s covered in blood,” he said calmly.

“I—I...it was from a fight with Dudley!” he quickly came up with.

“Your aunt and uncle told me. They started accusing each other and blurted out all the despicable things they’ve done to you.” Harry tried to interrupt with another excuse but Mr. Weasley stopped him. “I talked to Mr. Stenson about it as well. He told me everything. I’m sorry if that was a violation of your trust, but under the certain circumstances...”

Harry started shivering violently. He hadn’t wanted this.

“It wasn’t bad, really. They were probably exaggerating,” he insisted desperately.

“Harry, they starved you...” Mr. Weasley reminded him.

“No, they put Dudley on a diet too!”

“They made you do all the housework.”

“It was just chores!”

“Your uncle threw you through a glass table!”

“It was an accident!” Harry yelled wildly.

“He stabbed you!”

“He was drunk, he didn’t mean to, really!” Harry insisted in a pleading tone. He had no earthly idea why he was protecting his relatives. It just didn’t feel like protecting the Dursleys, but instead, it felt as if he were protecting himself. A part of him desperately wanted to believe his words. Deep down, maybe he had always believed them.

Mr. Weasley grabbed his shoulders, causing Harry to nearly jump out of his skin. His body went rigid and he winced out of pure reflex. Mr. Weasley looked into Harry’s eyes.

“Don’t worry, Harry, I’m not going to hurt you,” he said reassuringly. Harry looked down, ashamed. Mr. Weasley placed a finger under Harry’s chin and gently raised it until Harry was looking at him. “Harry, I would never hurt you. You have people who love you now, people who would never hurt you. I don’t know how to make you understand that you are part of our family. You have so many people that would adopt you in a second. If Sirius and Remus weren’t here, I have a feeling that we’d be battling over custody of you with the Stensons. But Harry, what I really want you to understand is that if you ever have a problem, you can always come to me or Molly. We’ll always be there for you, no matter what. There will always be room for you at the Burrow, for any length of time and for any reason. Do you understand that, Harry?”

Harry nodded numbly. He lowered his head once again.

"Does everybody know?" he asked quietly.

"I haven't told anyone..."

Harry looked up hopefully.

"...but I'm going to tell my wife. And once the ministry calms down, I'm going to report it and make sure your uncle is punished," said Mr. Weasley resolutely.

"No please, you can't!" Harry pleaded. "It'll get to all the newspapers and stuff. They jump all over anything."

"Okay, I'll talk to the headmaster and your godfather and we'll figure something out, but still going to have to tell Molly."

"But..." Harry pleaded.

"Harry," Mr. Weasley interrupted, "why don't you want her to know?"

There was a long pause while Harry thought about the question. There were a ton of reasons: it was embarrassing, she would pity him, she'd know he was weak, he'd have one more person to always feel slightly ashamed around. Yet he couldn't tell Mr. Weasley any of those.

"I don't know," he muttered, looking down at his lap once again.

"Harry," Mr. Weasley said gently, "don't feel ashamed. It's your uncle who's responsible for what he did, not you. You did nothing wrong."

Harry didn't say anything. What could he say? The man who sat next to him now seemed completely different, just by knowing Harry's secret. Harry couldn't be sure what Mr. Weasley was thinking, and that made him very nervous.

"Well, I'm sure you want to get on with seeing your friends. We'll talk about this later," he said kindly.

Harry nodded numbly. Mr. Weasley put a comforting hand on Harry's shoulder, but Harry merely stiffened under the touch. The redheaded man sighed and left the room, letting Ron and Hermione in.

The two sat next to his bed and smiled at him through their tears. Hermione took Harry's hand in her own and kissed it, then resting it against her cheek. Ron was still shaking slightly, but looked better than before.

"You're really back," Hermione said, squeezing a few more tears out of her eyes.

"Couldn't break up the trio, now could I?" he said with a grin that was slightly forced, as he tried to push his conversation with Mr. Weasley out of his mind. "We haven't gotten into nearly enough trouble yet."

"And now that 'Mione's blossoming into a nice little troublemaker herself, the fun's just getting started," Ron said with a smile, wiping at his cheeks again. "Harry, it was worse than I had ever imagined," he added quietly.

Hermione nodded solemnly. "It was awful. I felt like I was surrounded by Dementors; like I would never be happy again." She shuddered

Harry stared at the two, not knowing what to say.

"I'm so happy you're back, mate. It hurt not to have you there," Ron said truthfully. He wanted Harry to realize how much he was cared about, since Harry had so much trouble believing that anyone could truly care about him.

"Harry, what You-Kno—Voldemort said to you, about us not caring. That you were nothing more to us than a scar...that couldn't be further from the truth. We love you so much, and it has nothing to do with you being famous or Voldemort or anything like that," Hermione said seriously.

"I know, 'Mione," Harry said quietly. "You two are the best friends ever."

“He called you worthless,” Ron said bluntly. “He’s either a bloody liar or the dumbest person to ever walk the earth. You can’t even understand how much you’re worth, Harry. To us. To Sirius and Lupin. To the whole school. Even the whole bloody wizarding world! You should have seen what your...erm...death...did to everyone. Tomorrow, when you’re allowed out of here, you’ll have to go see the Quidditch field, where Dumbledore let all the visitors put all their flowers and stuff. But of course you mean the most to the people who knew you, like us, and....yeah,” he finished lamely.

Hermione turned toward her boyfriend with a fond smile. “Ron, I love you dearly, but listening to you try to string together a coherent thought is sometimes painful.” Harry chuckled as Ron glared at her. Hermione turned back to Harry. “But, if you managed to make sense of Ron’s little jumbling rant there, he said some really smart things.”

Harry grinned, blushing slightly. “Er...thanks guys,” he said, embarrassed.

The trio talked until Madam Pomfrey told them that it was time to leave, and no, they could not stay the night this time. Harry needed his sleep.

Harry’s two friends stood. Hermione kissed him on the forehead and told him to get some rest. Ron hugged Harry once more.

“I guess you still get to calm me down on my wedding day,” he said quietly, reminding Harry of their conversation months before. Harry grinned.

“And you at mine. How horrifying,” he joked. The two chuckled.

Hermione and Ron were just out of the door, when Hermione ran back, calling to Ron that she had forgotten something. She ran up to Harry and slid a rolled up piece of parchment out of her pocket, under the top of his covers, making sure Madam Pomfrey didn’t see. Harry recognized it as the Marauder’s Map.

"I forgot to give it to Professor McGonagall. I was planning on using it to find Ginny at some point. I don't think I'll manage to find her tonight though," she said quietly with a meaningful look. "Don't get caught." She winked at him and ran out the door after Ron.

Harry chuckled a bit, thinking that Hermione had become a bad influence on him. Madam Pomfrey looked at him suspiciously, but he just shot her an innocent look.

"How are you feeling?" she asked accusingly, as if he had let his friends run amuck in the Hospital Wing.

"I'm feeling fine, thank you," he said, for once feeling truly grateful for her concern. He didn't know why, but it seemed to mean a lot at the moment.

"All right, then, let's get you on a nice sleeping potion," she said turning toward her shelves of potions.

"Actually, I don't think I'll need one," Harry said, faking a yawn and sliding down into a laying position. "I'm about to fall asleep."

Madam Pomfrey shot him a suspicious look, but Harry faked another yawn and acted like he was having trouble keeping his eyes open. It wasn't too hard as he was a bit tired, but he couldn't go to sleep just yet.

"All right then. Get some rest. I'll know if you haven't been sleeping tomorrow, and if you want to be out in time for the feast, you better be very well rested," she said sternly. Harry nodded tiredly, and closed his eyes.

Madam Pomfrey went through her office into her chambers. Harry waited about ten minutes to make sure she was gone. She checked on him after three minutes to make sure he was still in bed, but he was pretending to be asleep. She shook her head and left again, muttering to herself about being paranoid.

Once the ten minutes had gone by, Harry looked at the map in the moonlight. The dot that said "Virginia Weasley" was sitting out by the

lake. Harry quietly slid out of bed. He looked around for a school robe, but to his utter dismay, there were none. He'd have to go in the hospital wing pajamas. Even knowing he looked like a prat, he quietly tiptoed to the door, silently opened it, slipped out, and closed it without the slightest sound.

The halls were all dark, as it was well passed curfew. Hermione had told him that Ginny had occasionally disappeared, coming back in the middle of the night. They had let her be, knowing that she needed to be alone at those times.

Harry felt very exposed breaking the curfew without his invisibility cloak, but refused to turn back.

Harry followed the Maurader's Map outside, nearing the spot where the dot sat. As he neared the lake and looked up, squinting through the darkness as his eyes began to adjust. The water's surface was smooth and reflected the stars. A large tentacle, belonging to the Giant Squid, lazily lifted out of the water and slid back under. He saw nothing besides the lake, confirming that Ginny must be under his invisibility cloak. As he got right near the dot, he tentatively spoke.

"Ginny?"

There was a rustling sound and then a gasp. Ginny's stunned, frozen face came into view as she shakily pulled the cloak off, letting it pool around her knees. Harry's breath caught as he realized that he could only describe her as beautiful.

She closed her eyes and let a few teardrops trickle out as she silently chanted, "It's not real. It's not real."

Harry sat down in front of her. He gently took her hand, causing her to shriek. With wide eyes, she looked from her hand, which lay in Harry's, and Harry's eyes.

"Ginny, everyone's been trying to find you all night. Snape found a way to bring me back and get rid of the cancer that I had. It's a long explanation, but I'm back. I'm alive. I'm real," he said with a shy smile.

Ginny slowly reached up and tentatively touched his cheek with her fingertips. When she felt that Harry was both solid and real, she let out a shuddering sob and flung her arms around his neck.

“Oh please don’t let this be a dream,” she whispered.

“It’s not, I promise,” Harry whispered into her hair.

She took his face in her hands and gently kissed him on the forehead. Somehow it seemed a lot different than when Mrs. Weasley or Hermione did it.

They both let their eyes rest closed as she rested her forehead against his, tears trickling down her face. “Then it’s a miracle,” she whispered.

Harry thought about it for a second. “Yeah. It is,” he said seriously.

Ginny pulled her face away from Harry’s and looked into his eyes with a smile. Harry smiled back and wiped away the tears on her cheeks with his thumbs.

“Harry, I...” Ginny started but was interrupted.

“Who’s there?” asked a suspicious voice. Ginny and Harry raised their heads toward the voice, just as Fang pounced on Harry, knocking him flat on his back, and began licking his face excitedly.

“Fang!” Harry sputtered. “Off Fang!”

“Ginny? What are yeh doin’ down ‘ere? It’s nigh’! Who’s tha’?” he asked. His voice sounded full of misery, as if he was two seconds away from tears. “Fang, off! Come ‘ere boy!” Hagrid whistled and Fang happily got off of Harry and walked over to Hagrid’s side.

Harry wiped his sticky, wet face off on his sleeve with a snort of disgust. He sat up and heard Hagrid gasp.

“HARRY? No yer dead!” he said in shock. He took a frightened step back, nearly trodding on Fang’s tail. Harry felt immediately guilty. Dumbledore had told Harry that he would refrain from informing Hagrid until Harry was a little better healed, since the half-giant could be a bit overwhelming at times.

“Hagrid, it’s really me, I swear. Professor Snape brought me back, it’s a long story. I was never completely dead, you see, and—oomph!”

He was interrupted as Hagrid bounded over and seized him into a hug, lifting his feet straight off the ground. Hagrid wailed as he hugged Harry to him. Harry winced slightly, since he was still a bit sore from the Cruciatus Curse. Nobody else noticed though, and he found that Hagrid’s happiness made the pain easier to deal with.

“Oh Harry, thank Merlin! Yer alive! I though’, I though’...” Hagrid couldn’t seem to finish his sentence. His chin wobbled dangerously before he burst out into more hysterical sobs. He hugged Harry even tighter, like a teddy bear. Ginny giggled and at the half-giant’s display of emotions. Fang barked happily and ran around them in circles.

“Hagrid,” he gasped. “I can’t breathe.”

Hagrid immediately placed Harry’s feet back on the ground. Harry gulped in air.

“Sorry there, Harry,” he said, wiping away some tears and blowing his nose into his sleeve. “I’m jus’ so happy that yer back.”

“That’s fine Hagrid. I’m glad to be back.”

“Don’ you ever go doin’ tha’ again, yeh hear?”

“All right, Hagrid, I’ll work on it,” Harry said smiling. Hagrid eyed Harry’s clothes and bare-feet, causing the raven-haired boy to blush slightly.

“Harry, are yeh s’pose ter be in the Hospital Win’?” he asked in a light, accusing tone.

“Er...” he trailed off, choosing to move his eyes away from Hagrid’s.

“I’ll take tha’ as a yes,” Hagrid said with a shaky chuckle, wiping away the streams of tears on his face away with his sleeve. “Come on, yeh two. Le’s get yeh back before Madam Pomfrey pitches a fit. She can be a frightenin’ woman.”

He led them inside, walking Ginny to the common room first, where she and Harry gave each other a shy “Goodnight,” before Ginny slipped through the portal, carrying Harry’s cloak under her arm.

Hagrid and Harry walked through the darkened, silent halls.

“So Harry, wha’ were yeh doin’ down there with Ginny Weasley?” Hagrid asked knowingly. “Is there summat yeh wanna tell me?”

“No,” Harry said indignantly. “I was just talking to her.”

“Oh is tha’ all?” he said cheerily, in a tone that implied that he didn’t believe it for one second. “Are yeh sure the whole ‘Boy-Who-Lived now the Boy-In-Love’ thin’ isn’ finally true?”

Harry scowled at him. “Of course not!”

“Really? Because yer eyes tell a differnt story.” Harry glared at him and Hagrid chuckled. “O’ course. You littl’uns never like such serious words like love.”

“Little? I’m nearly sixteen, thank you,” Harry cried indignantly.

Hagrid whirled around and grabbed his shoulders, causing Harry to start. “Harry, wha’ abou’ the sickness you had? Dumbledore told me an’...”

“Hagrid!” Harry interrupted. “Don’t worry, it’s cured. I’m fine.”

“Oh thank Merlin,” Hagrid said with relief, continuing to walk along with Harry.

As they neared the Hospital Wing, Hagrid decided to turn back so Madam Pomfrey didn't hear his loud footsteps.

"If she lets yeh out tomorrow, come see me for a cuppa tea, all righ'?" he whispered.

Harry promised he would if he was let out in time, but warned him Madam Pomfrey was getting a bit immune to his puppy-dog faces and begging.

After the half-giant walked off, Harry silently slipped back into the Hospital Wing and into his bed. He sighed in relief when Madam Pomfrey didn't come out screaming at him.

He quickly fell into a deep sleep.

The Leaving Feast had a solemn air about it, similar to that of the previous year. Harry and his friends had convinced Dumbledore not to make an announcement and had planned, with some helpful ideas from the twins, the most amusing way to make Harry's return to the living known.

Everyone filed in and sat at their respective tables, all grim and gloomy, though some were mourning different deaths. Nobody really looked up as the last of the stragglers entered and made their ways to their tables, though as Harry walked in, he shot a quick grin up at the head table. Dumbledore's eyes twinkled merrily. Hagrid and Professor Lupin shook their heads with amusement. Even Professor McGonagall seemed to be fighting a grin. Harry sort of wished Snape would have been there to see it. He thought the man would've found some amusement in the situation.

Harry slid down at the table between Ron and Hermione who both bit back grins. The whole table began to eat and Harry casually piled food onto his plate. It took a few moments for anyone to notice him, but soon Dean Thomas looked over and froze. His jaw dropped and his eyes went wide. Harry waved at him and Dean blinked hard. Ron and Hermione were having a hard time concealing their laughter.

Dean dumbly poked Seamus, not tearing his eyes from Harry.

“What is it De...” Seamus trailed off as he followed Dean’s gaze and saw Harry. Seamus looked like he had swallowed a flobberworm.

“What’s up with you two?” Padma Patil asked. She leaned forward and followed their gaze. When she saw Harry, she screamed and fell backwards off the bench. This caught a lot of the Gryffindor’s attentions, and soon everyone had seen Harry, either screaming or freezing in shock. Many were pointing or falling off the seats. Ron and the twins all lost it and doubled over with laughter. Harry, Hermione, and Neville were all laughing as well, though, Hermione kept informing them how mean this was.

Now the commotion had got the attention of the rest of the houses, but as so many Gryffindors were standing now, none of them could really see. Everyone was talking now, their eyes on the Gryffindor table.

“What’s the matter with them?”

“Can you see anything?”

“They’re pointing but I can’t see!!”

The Gryffindors were gaping from Harry’s laughing friends to Harry, trying to make sense of it all.

“All right,” Dumbledore’s cheery voice boomed. “I think that is enough fun for now. May our mystery guest please come up here?” He chuckled merrily.

Harry climbed out of the bench and walked up to where Dumbledore was standing and bashfully turned to face the Great Hall.

Every jaw in the sea of students dropped.

“I assure you all that this is the real Harry Potter. He is very much alive, thanks to the skills of our wonderful potions master, who unfortunately isn’t here right now. No, we haven’t found anything to bring back the dead, Harry was a special case where his life energy

was in a sort of limbo. If anyone would like a better explanation, please feel free to come to my office after the feast.”

The hall was silent except for the sniggers from Harry’s friends. Everyone gaped at him and Harry felt himself start to go red. He began to walk back to the Gryffindor table when he heard a small, “Harry?”

Harry looked up and saw a blur before someone much smaller collided with him, wrapping his arms around Harry’s middle.

“Hey Charles,” Harry said with a small chuckle.

The older Crabbe looked as if he would like nothing better than to pound his little brother into a pancake as the other loyal-to-Voldemort Slytherins glared at him.

“Harry, I’m really good at defending myself now! I wanted to tell you so bad that I even used that Expelliarmus spell on Vincent, when he was picking on Draco, and this other spell I learned. Now, Vincent’s scared of me,” he said quietly. The hall was now buzzing with noise, so there was no way the older Crabbe could have heard, thankfully. Somehow, Harry wasn’t quite convinced that the older Crabbe, who looked like a freight train, was that scared of the younger one who more resembled a licorice stick. Harry flattered Charles though and told him how excellent that was.

“How’s Malfoy doing though?” he asked quietly so no one could hear. That didn’t seem right that Crabbe had been picking on Malfoy.

“Well, he’s not a Malfoy anymore since he got disowned by his whole family. He’s not doing all that well I guess being that all his friends hate him so much now. I’m not really sure though since I haven’t been seeing him around,” he said with a shrug. This gave Harry some food for thought as Charles ran back to his friends, ignoring the menacing looks he was getting from some of the older Slytherins.

Harry finally returned to the Gryffindor table, where he was bombarded with people shaking his hand or hugging him, expressing their relief to have him back.

"I realize," Professor Dumbledore began again with a smile, "that Mr. Potter is attempting to shy his way out of the spotlight, but I refuse to let him escape with properly thanking him and acknowledging what he has done."

Harry's face turned crimson with embarrassment.

"We have all known Harry Potter, personally or by reputation, throughout our time together at this school. Harry sacrificed his life for every person in this school and more, stopping someone who you all saw had no qualms about taking the lives of whomever he chose. He bravely faced the Dark Lord, even with the knowledge that he would not make it out alive. He saved our school and he saved our lives and the lives of many more. For this, I honor him," Dumbledore said raising his glass for a toast. Nearly every other person in the hall did the same, except those who weren't so excited about Harry's return to the living. "To Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lives-Again," he said with a smile. Harry grinned at the play on his nickname as everyone followed suit.

"To Harry Potter!" the Weasley twins shouted.

"To Harry Potter," Ron and Hermione said loudly raising their glasses and smiling broadly at him.

Harry's face burned with bashfulness as everyone drank to him.

"All right Harry, I'll stop harassing you now and let you eat, as everyone else should do as well," Dumbledore said with a laugh before sitting down next to Professor McGonagall who was wiping away tears despite her genuine smile.

Harry loaded food on his plate as millions of questions and comments were shot his way.

"Wow, Harry, thank Merlin you're back."

"I can't believe you actually defeated the Dark Lord!"

"What was it like, being er...like you were the last few days?" asked Seamus.

"You mean dead?" Harry asked.

Seamus nodded sheepishly and everyone around them looked at him in expectation. Harry's expression turned grim.

"It was horrible."

"What do you mean?" Lavender Brown breathed.

"Well, I murdered someone, didn't I? Even if it was a Dark Lord, there's only one place to go after that." He pointed down. "Unless you want to spend eternity in extreme suffering, I suggest none of you ever kill anyone," he said gravely.

"Ex-extreme suffering?" Neville stuttered apprehensively.

"Yes. I'm sure you've all heard of it. The flames, the endless labor, the decaying slave masters, you know."

Hermione and Ginny rolled their eyes, but it seemed that most were more gullible than them.

Everyone around him was silent, most staring at him in absolute horror with their jaws hanging open. Many, including Ron, had gone ghastly pale and looked as if they were about to faint. Harry looked around at them grimly. Then the corners of his mouth began to twitch and curve slightly upwards.

"Harry, you prat!" Ron yelled, punching him on the arm. Harry burst out laughing and everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

"Merlin, you guys are easy. I actually can't remember a thing. It was just like being in a dreamless sleep for the last few days. I feel like yesterday was when Voldemort attacked," he said, still grinning at the panic he had arisen.

“Hey Harry,” Hermione said quietly, “take a look at Cho.”

Harry followed her gaze to find Cho Chang, glaring daggers at her plate with a very large bandage over her nose. Harry looked back at Hermione curiously.

“What happened to her?” he asked rather unsympathetically.

“Ginny happened to her. Cho was trying to start up some of the old rumors again, and Ginny defended your honor,” Hermione said with a chuckle. They looked over at the redhead who was laughing with her brothers. “Us and redheads, eh?” she commented quietly.

“I always knew we had good taste,” Harry said with a smile.

“I don’t know about good taste,” Hermione said quietly nodding her head toward Ron who was talking with his mouth totally stuffed. Harry laughed. Hermione sighed, looking at her boyfriend fondly. “He is quite a catch though,” she said sincerely with a smile.

Harry chuckled. “He sure is,” he said, as Ron shoveled more food into his mouth.

The next morning, Snape was packing up the last of his things, thanking Merlin he would be leaving the castle soon. A long vacation was definitely in order. Snape sighed as he passed through his living room to his bedroom, seeing Draco staring into the fire with the same depressed look he’d had for the past week. The boy had lost both his family and his friends because of his decision. All of his old friends had been children of Death Eaters and refused to associate with a “traitor.” Now the boy was utterly alone during such a hard time, with no one except for a snarky potions master for company.

Yet, though Dumbledore had insisted that he was the best person to take Draco in, he didn’t know what to do to cheer up the boy. He wasn’t exactly a cheery person himself. It would be wonderful if Draco could be friends with Harry Potter, but Snape knew that that would be impossible. All he could hope for now was a bit of a miracle.

As he was packing the last of his potions into a box, there was a hesitant knock at the door. Snape came out of his private lab and glanced at Draco, who was still staring numbly into the fire, before opening the door to reveal none other than Harry Potter.

“Er...hi Professor.”

“Harry,” he said quietly with a nod, taking the young Gryffindor by pleasant surprise that he had decided to continue calling Harry by his first name, at least when nobody else was around. “It’s good to see you’re feeling well, but this really is a bad time. I’ll see you next year,” he said, beginning to close the door. He didn’t want to agitate Draco anymore by inviting his worst enemy in.

“Wait!” Harry said, catching the door before it closed. “Actually, the reason I came down here was really because some of the Slytherins said that Malfoy might be down here.”

Snape froze and raised an eyebrow.

“And why would that interest you?” he asked.

“I really want to talk to him, so if he’s here I can stop begging Slytherins for their password and searching the school.”

Snape looked over at Draco who was now looking curiously over the back of the couch with interest.

“Let him in, Sev,” he said quietly as he rose from the couch.

Harry hesitantly stepped through the door and passed the potion’s professor. Snape went back into his lab to give the boys the sense of privacy, despite the fact that he would, of course, be eavesdropping.

Back in the living room, Draco crossed his arms and sneered at Harry with a significant lack of conviction. “What do you want, Potter?”

“I wanted to say thank you for what you did. That was the bravest thing I’ve ever seen anyone do, standing up to your father like that.”

“Well, I just got disowned by my entire family for it, but I’m glad it pleased you, Potter,” he said with cold sarcasm. Harry did notice a slight softening of Malfoy’s scowl, though.

“Well, Malfoy...”

“Don’t call me that, Potter. I’m not part of that family anymore,” he said, trying to sound cold, but Harry could detect the sadness in the Slytherin’s voice and expression.

“Oh. Okay. So, um...Draco,” he said, the name feeling strange to say. “I know you probably won’t want to, and will probably laugh in my face when I ask you, but I was wondering if you wanted to come over this summer,” Harry asked awkwardly, soon smirking at the shocked look on Draco’s face.

“Is that a joke? Why would you want me to come over to your house?” he asked incredulously.

“Well, I know if it was me staying with a professor all summer, I might get bored. And I’m staying with an adult all summer so I’ll probably get bored too. And we’re building a Quidditch pitch out back, so we could play if you came over,” he explained, not really sure himself why he was inviting his sworn enemy over. “Basically, I just don’t think you’re as bad as you like to pretend you are.”

“What does the Weasel think about this lovely idea?” Draco asked, examining his fingernails with an airy façade.

“I haven’t talked to him about it. It doesn’t really matter to me what he thinks about it since I’m inviting you over to my house, not his. I don’t think he’s really against you or anything anymore though, after what you did,” he said with a shrug.

“Hmm...well I don’t know, Potter, I have a very busy schedule this summer and I don’t know if I can fit in hanging around with an arrogant Gryffindor,” Draco said haughtily. Harry sighed.

“All right, well, I’ll owl you to see if you change your mind. I better go finish getting packed,” Harry said, starting for the door.

“Wait!” Draco called almost desperately, dropping his princely act. Harry turned around curiously. Draco suddenly looked nervous. “Er...I was wondering, well, you know, thinking and stuff and it just seems that, well, um...” He struggled to find the right words. “Did your relatives ever...because sometimes my father, he, um...when Madam Pomfrey said the thing about your uncle and broken ribs, I thought maybe...and since you’re living with your godfather now instead, I thought...”

The two boys stared at each other for a few moments, both looking equally anxious. Harry forced his customary response of “I don’t know what you’re talking about” down and made one of the hardest decisions of life.

“You mean, er, did my uncle ever abuse me?”

Draco nodded. Harry sighed and looked down at his hands.

“Well, yeah. He did.”

“Are you just saying that?” Draco asked suspiciously.

He lifted up his shirt and showed the blonde-haired Slytherin his scar. “That’s where my uncle stabbed me,” he said nervously before pulling his shirt back down. “And you heard correctly. My uncle broke my ribs.”

“Did he, er, do that kind of stuff a lot?” Draco asked cautiously.

Harry reminded himself that Draco obviously didn’t have a great home life either and forced himself to speak. “Er, well, not that intense usually, but with the general child abuse thing, yeah,” he said with a dry laugh.

Draco looked away into the fire. “My dad, he used to get mad when I wasn’t into the whole Death Eater thing like he was and he would definitely show it. He never stabbed me or anything, but...you know...”

"He hit you?" Harry asked in an understanding tone that put Draco at ease. The blonde nodded. "Bastard," Harry spat in reference to Lucius Malfoy, shivering slightly at the thought.

Draco looked up at him with a curious gaze, not ever having met someone who could understand. The few people who knew about his father had either told him to buck up and take it (those being his lovely family) or gave him blind sympathy as if he were an animal in a cage to gawk at. They'd feel sorry for him but never truly know why. They didn't understand. In reality, they had no idea what his life was like on the other side of the bars. Somehow, Harry's one, understanding "Bastard" was much more comforting than any other words of commiseration he had received. It somehow made him see that he wasn't pathetic to be scared of his father.

"No shit," he said with a smirk.

"Well, I figure that just because they happen to share your blood doesn't really make them family. Nobody can help who they're related to, and sometimes, you get stuck with assholes."

"Tell me about it."

"Well, I have to go. The train's leaving soon. I'll owl you soon I guess, just in case you change your mind about coming over. Feel free to stop by anytime, especially if you feel like getting your ass kicked in Quidditch," Harry said with a smirk.

"Dream on, Potter," Malfoy smirked back.

"If I'm calling you by your first name, you have to call me by mine, deal?"

Draco made a face. "That's going to be almost as weird as hearing you say my first name."

"Well apparently hell has frozen over," Harry said with a shrug. "See you later Ma...Draco."

"In your dreams, er...Harry," Draco said with a smirk as Harry rolled his eyes and left.

Snape opened the door of his lab and leaned against the doorway crossing his arms casually.

"So, what was that all about?" he asked amusedly.

"Potter just invited me round his house this summer, as if you didn't already know from your eavesdropping," Draco said as he sat back down on the couch.

"Are you going to go?" he asked curiously.

"Hang out with a dorky Gryff? Yeah right," he scoffed. He paused. "Am I allowed? You know, just in case I have nothing better to do than go and annoy him," he asked casually.

"Yes. In fact, I definitely think you should go. Give him a chance. He'd make a good friend," Snape said sincerely.

Draco looked up questioningly and snorted. "You think it's a good idea to hang out with Potter?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact. I think it would do you both some good. You two aren't all that different, really. You both have had hard lives and are surrounded by people who can't really relate. If you can get nothing else from each other, you could at least get understanding. Besides, I happen to have had a change of opinion about him."

"Oh really? That's something I thought I'd never hear," Draco said with amusement.

"Well, I never thought you and Potter would arrange a play date either, so I guess things are changing," he teased. Draco sneered at him.

"Play date, humph," he scoffed in an annoyed tone. "Can you believe he invited me over though? It must be some sort of weird trick or sympathy thing. Maybe just trying to make himself feel better after what happened. Like he could make me actually believe he'd invite

me over for the hell of it.” He crossed his arms angrily and sank back in the couch, staring once again toward the fire. Snape walked over and sat down in a chair facing in the direction of the couch.

“Draco, look at me. I know you haven’t known very many worthy people in your life. They’ve deceived you, treated you like scum, tried to form you into another groveling minion of evil against your will, and have made you feel horrible about yourself. I know you don’t feel like anyone could ever truly like you or want to be around you. But, you must believe me that that’s not true. I know you better than anyone and I know that you are a good person. You just need to work on your people skills a bit,” Snape suggested with a smirk.

“You’re one to talk,” Draco grumbled.

“My point is that I know Potter. He feels much of the same things you do. He’s a little lost, as you are, and he’s lied to a hell of a lot of people throughout this past year to keep his secrets. But I can tell when people are lying and when they’re not. Potter has obviously gotten a glimpse of what you’re really like, and though he is a...Gryffindor,” he said the word with a bit of a shudder that caused Draco to have to fight a smile from his face, “I truly think he wants a chance to be your friend. I suggest you take it. It’s very difficult to find people you can count on in this world. You can count on Har—Potter.”

“Merlin, if you’d have told me we’d be having a conversation like this a year ago, I would have committed you to St. Mungo’s,” Draco mused.

Snape rose to finish packing his things. “Just consider it Draco,” he said as he patted the boy on the shoulder.

The Slytherin went back to staring at the fire, but now with a significantly more cheerful look than before. It only took a few minutes for the blonde to begin rifling through his bags for his Quidditch books, murmuring something about showing that Gryffindor who would kick whose ass.

Snape went back to packing up his potions ingredients with a smile. Harry Potter was definitely one of the few on his good side.

The next day's train ride went a lot smoother than usual. He shared a compartment with Hermione, Ron, Neville, Eloise, and Ginny. They told Harry about the candlelight ceremony and other things that he missed. Harry's face burned as they told the story, surprised and slightly embarrassed that everyone came together in honor of him, even after they reminded him that he saved the school.

They finally reached King's Cross Station. He had already wrote the Stensons to tell them that they didn't have to worry about sneaking him away from the station and hiding him at their house. He promised to have them over at some point that summer to show Kota what Quidditch was.

They crossed the barrier, Harry being the last one through, to find Hermione's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, and Sirius, all waiting together. Harry had never felt happier. He began walking over to Sirius when someone roughly grabbed his arm and began dragging him away.

Harry looked up in horror, finding himself staring into the glaring face of his uncle who was wearing a hat that covered even his ears. He smelled strongly of alcohol.

"Let's go, boy. You're coming with me," he growled, eyeing the Weasleys nervously. He obviously hoped to get Harry out of there without alerting their attention. At the moment, he was succeeding as nobody had yet noticed him being pulled away.

"I'm never going back to your house," Harry spat, attempting and failing to rip his arm away. "I'm living with my godfather now."

"That's what you think. You're coming with me and you're going to take off these damn ears and tails," Uncle Vernon sneered quietly.

"Ears and tails? I don't know what you're talking about! Sirius!" Harry yelled, but over the din of the station, his calls weren't enough to

capture the attention of his godfather, who seemed to be in a deep conversation with Mr. Weasley.

“Shut it boy or you’ll be living in a nightmare this summer.” He pulled at the struggling Harry harder, trying to escape with him quickly.

“Sirius!” he yelled louder. Instead of catching Sirius’s attention, he alerted another of the three people there who knew the seriousness of the situation.

“Sirius!” Ron yelled as he raced passed him up to Harry. “Let him go you great git!” he screamed trying to pry Uncle Vernon’s fingers off of Harry’s arm. With his free hand, Uncle Vernon grabbed Ron by the hair and flung him into Harry’s trolley.

“Don’t touch my friends!” Harry yelled, kicking his uncle in the leg. Uncle Vernon’s face grew purple, contorting into a look of rage. He released Harry’s arm, only to use the hand to punch Harry in the side of the face, sending him crashing to the ground.

“How dare you, you damn little brat. After all I’ve done for you! Now come on!” he growled ferociously advancing on his nephew.

At this point, several people had stopped to stare, but nobody was doing anything.

Harry scooted backwards, but was not as quick as his uncle.

“Stop making a scene, or the last time you visited will look like a holiday,” Uncle Vernon growled. He made to grab Harry again, but someone stepped in between the two.

It was Sirius, with a look on his face that could convince anyone that he was indeed a murderer. He twisted his body back and then punched Uncle Vernon’s face with all his might. Uncle Vernon grabbed his nose, which was pouring out blood. There was no question that it was broken.

“You will never touch my godson or his friends again. You will never get within a hundred yards of Harry. If I ever see you in the same

vicinity as my godson again, I will not hesitate to rip you apart, limb by limb. Do you understand me?" Sirius said in a murderous tone. He moved aside his Muggle jacket enough for Vernon to see his wand protruding from his pocket.

"I know what's going on!" Uncle Vernon shouted drunkenly. "You!" he yelled pointing a shaking finger at Harry, who was still on the floor, a hand over the quickly forming bruise on his cheek. "I warned you about telling lies!" He turned to a murderous looking Sirius and took a step back. "Whatever he said was a lie!" In seeing the obvious look of fury on Sirius's face, he turned to Mrs. Weasley. "If he told you I beat him, he's lying! He's lying about it all. I never touched him. I never stabbed him. He's a bloody liar!"

Harry's face burned with shame as he avoided the gazes of all the stunned Weasleys and Grangers. Sirius ran up to Uncle Vernon and seized him by the collar, slamming him up against the barrier between Platforms 8 and 9.

"How dare you! You are the liar, you bastard! I saw what you did to Harry. You almost killed him! He almost DIED you bastard!" Sirius screamed as he threw another punch into Vernon's face. The Weasleys and Grangers all looked at Harry in astonishment, as he scrambled to his feet. He avoided their gazes. He ran up to Sirius, who was trying to get in as many punches to Uncle Vernon as possible, as the fat man tried to hit him back.

"Sirius, stop it! Let's just leave!" Harry begged. Sirius met his eyes and nodded, stepping back, but Uncle Vernon tried launching himself toward Harry again and Sirius had to push the drunken man back. Mr. Weasley ran up to Harry and pulled him back, away from the fray.

Next thing they knew, policemen were pushing their way through the crowd, people in the surrounding crowd frantically telling them what was happening.

One of them put a hand on Sirius's shoulder. "We'll take it from here, sir," he said abruptly as the others wrestled Uncle Vernon into handcuffs.

Harry's jaw dropped. His uncle was being arrested! He was more shocked than anything else.

As the police dragged him away, he spat, "Fine, take the little brat. He's your burden now!"

The police wanted to ask Harry a few questions, but Sirius wouldn't allow it, telling them to contact the Stensons if they needed further information.

Thankfully, the crowd quickly died and the police left.

"Ron, are you okay?" he asked worriedly, finally meeting his friend's eye.

"Fine," he groaned, rubbing his arm where it had slammed into Harry's trunk. "But you're bleeding." He pointed at Harry's cheek. Harry wiped it quickly on his sleeve.

"I'm fine, really," he said truthfully. He was happy knowing that Sirius and Ron had both cared enough to stand up for him. He turned around to see the Weasleys and the Grangers looking shocked.

Hermione marched up to Harry and pulled him into a hug. "Your uncle's a moron," she whispered in his ear, "you'll never be a burden. We all love you." Harry blushed and smiled, wondering how Hermione knew the part of the whole ordeal that had hit him the hardest.

Sirius came over once Hermione had let go of Harry and put an arm around his godson's shoulders. "What do you say we get out of here, Harry?"

Harry smiled at him gratefully. "Yeah, I can't wait to see my room!" he said enthusiastically. He picked his things up with help from George, who was looking at him searchingly, trying to identify how he felt about what just happened.

"Harry?" he whispered worriedly.

"I'm fine, George, really I am," he said quietly back.

"Fred and I have been developing some stuff that can be sent by post. If we can send mail to prison, we'll make that bastard wish he was never born. If not, it can still go to the other two," George solemnly promised. Harry couldn't help but smile.

"Remember, we're having you all over this summer for a good old Quidditch match and some of my cooking," Sirius announced to all of them. Harry, who was standing slightly behind Sirius made silent gagging gestures at the mention of his cooking just to tease him, having never actually tried his cooking. Everyone laughed as Sirius caught him in the act. Harry stopped abruptly and put on an innocent face, but Sirius had already seen.

"I'll have you know my cooking is very good!"

"Oh I'm sure," Harry said sarcastically. "I'll see you all soon!" he called cheerfully to his friends and turned to leave with Sirius to what promised to be a new beginning to a much more hopeful future.

THE END

* * * * *

And thus ends the 293 page story that is Recnac Transfaerso, or is it the end? Well, apparently not. You see, a month or two ago, I had a wonderful epiphany for what the sequel could be. Before, I had select scenes in my mind that I'd like to put in a sequel, but no plot to connect it, so a sequel seemed out of the question. But now, oh, I know what I'm doing and have outlined it.

Yet for me to write a story, I must have at least a rough draft done to begin posting. So I take my leave of a month or so. Maybe longer since my life is going to get hectic soon with finals, but as second semester approaches, maybe I'll find more time to write! Maybe not, we'll see.

But the best part is really that the sequel is not yet set in stone, and so I'd love your guys' opinions and suggestions. So, even if you

haven't reviewed yet, do now! I'd love to know your fav/least fav parts of Recnac Transfaerso, and anything you want resolved in the second fic. I've set up many things in this fic to tie in with the sequel, so if you are disappointed in something, there may be a reason for having it the way it is. But still, complain, comment, etc. I need to hear the "Is this the end of the Dursleys?", "But Harry and Ginny never kissed, what's up with that?" and the "Eloise is meant for ____". Any and all of it is important. I may or may not use your decisions, depending if they will fit in the framework and if I want to do them. Lol.

So I take my leave from updating and such, but if you ever want to ask questions, give suggestions, clue in on how far I am on the second fic (wait a bit for these since I haven't begun the writing yet!), and other stuff, just email me at anytime.

Now for my thank you's. Thanks to Senri for the helping me with the H/G lake scene idea. Thank you to Terence for being my confidante and friend during this story and hopefully, for long after. Thank you to my faithful and wonderful reviewers. I honestly feel as if I've gotten to know many of you and hope you continue to read and review my stories. Wiccan PussyKat thank you for all your wonderful support and nudging me to update. You're probably the main one to thank for the speediness of updates for a long time. You didn't let me get lazy. Dadaiiro and ckat44 for being there practically since the beginning and for being so faithful with your wonderful reviews. Disassembly of Reason though I haven't heard from you in forever, I still deeply appreciate the in depth looks you took at this fic. Myr Halcyon, Thundering Lights, Bulldogchik05, Lady Abbey Bartlet, Paranoialn2005, BratPrincess-187, Chibi-Bex (loved our kidnapping the twins ideas), and others I know I'm forgetting to put down and will feel miserable about later. Catiechan for the Sirius scenes you inspired. I feel like I'm accepting an Oscar or something lol. There's many more I know I haven't put down who deserve to be recognized, but I have a bit of brain freeze right now, so I'm very sorry. I love you all though, and this fic would have never come this far without all the wonderful reviews.

One last plea: PLEASE REVIEW!! Even if you don't like reviewing or if it's a thousand years after I originally posted, please review. I want

to get an idea of how many people read this, and would love to hear from you, even if it's a word-long review.

Well, see you all soon—ish. *waves and disappears*